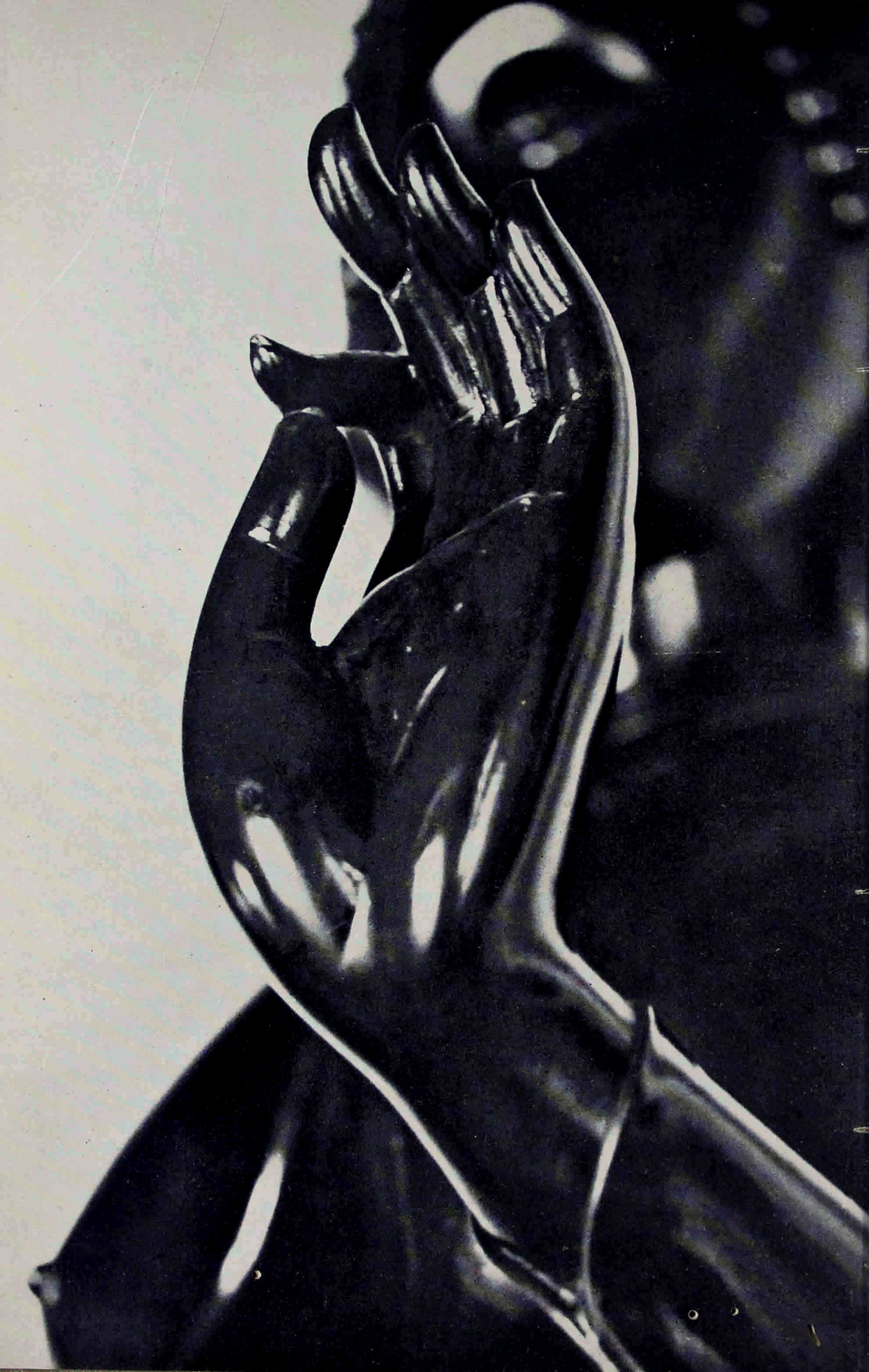


# WHAT IS BUDDHISM



KHANTIPĀLO BHIKKHU

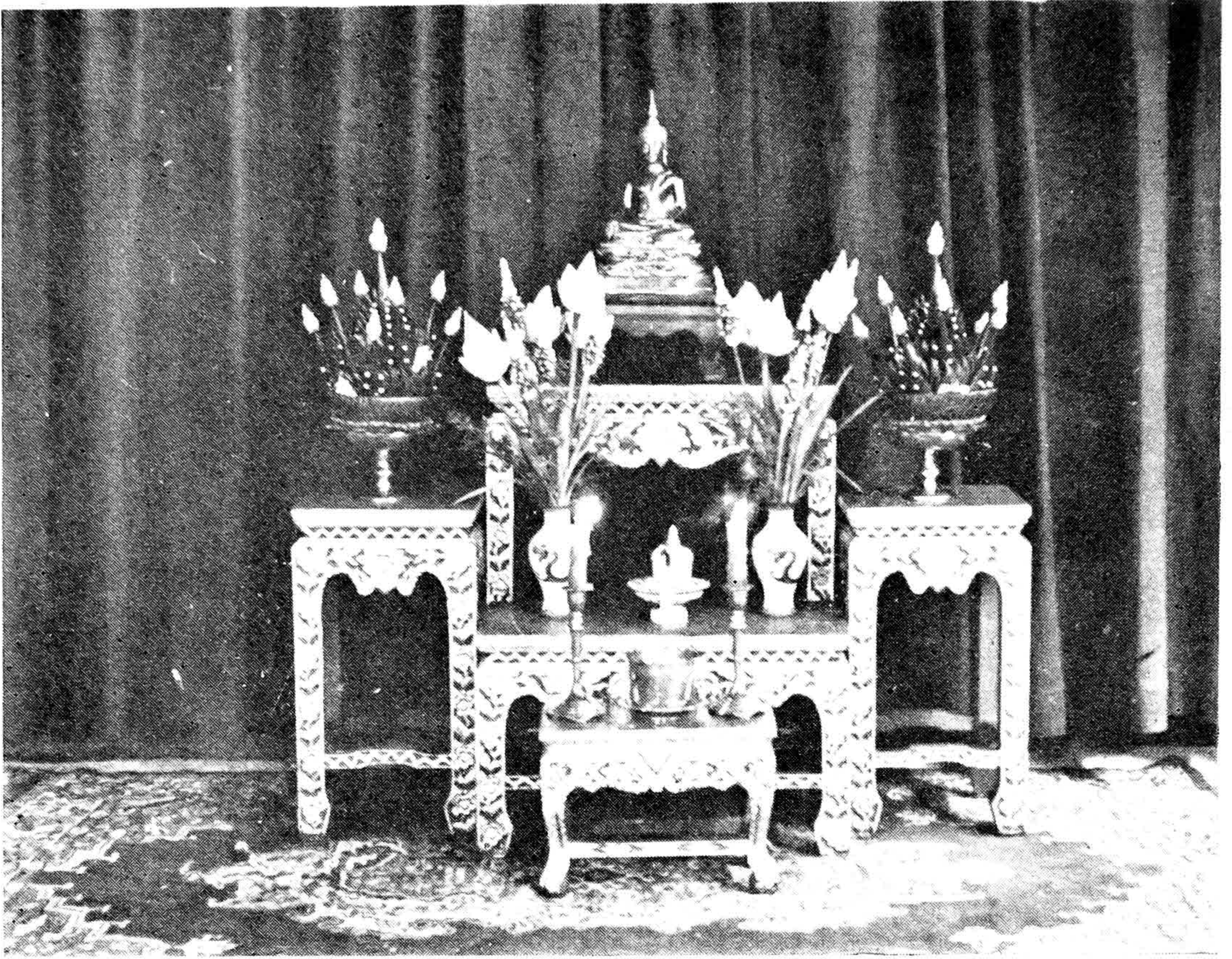
NAMO 'TASSA BHAGAVATO, ARAHATO SAMMĀ SAMBUDDHASSA  
Praise to the Blessed One, the Accomplished One, the Perfectly Illumined One |



# WHAT IS BUDDHISM

DEDICATED TO ALL 'FARANG'  
WHO ON COMING TO SIAM  
WANT TO KNOW  
WHAT IS BUDDHISM .





A shrine in a typical Buddhist household.

Buddha images in the cloister of a wat.



## LINE OF VENERATION TO LORD BUDDHA

“ The riches of this world and of the next,  
And all the precious things the heavens may hold,  
None can compare with the Tathāgata.\*  
Yea, in the Buddha shines this glorious gem,  
By virtue of this truth, may bliss abound!

Just as a forest grove puts forth its flowers  
When the first month of Summer heat doth come,  
So for the highest good of all, he preached  
The Truth Sublime which to Nirvāna leads.  
Yea, in the Buddha shines this glorious gem,  
By virtue of this truth, may bliss abound!”

Lord Buddha speaks:

“ Just so, O Kashyapa, the Buddha also  
Arises in this world just like a rain-cloud,  
And once the World’s Saviour has arisen, then he speaks  
And shows the true course to all living beings.

And so it is that, honoured by the world,  
the Seer, so great announces:

‘ The Tathāgata I am, the best of men, a Conqueror,  
Arisen in this world just like a rain-cloud.

I shall refresh all living beings,  
Whose bodies wither away, who cling to the triple world,  
Who wither away, in pain — at ease I will place them,  
Both pleasures I will give them and the final Rest.

---

\* Tathāgata. — A title of the Buddha meaning the Thus - come ( for the universal salvation of all beings ), or, Thus - gone ( to Nirvāna ).

Save in the section on the Theravada, where a quantity of brief extracts was difficult to avoid, I have preferred generous portions of selected Sutras to a pastiche of 'snippets.'

I make no apology for conflict, contrast, divergence of immediate aim and emphasis, or overlapping. As this is true of the Scriptures, so it is of any anthology. Buddhism is still growing and so are its Scriptures.

As examination of the Contents will show, the pattern of the book is as follows: first, the concept of the Buddha, taken at three levels, cosmic, mystical and human. Then what Dr. Conze very happily calls the Old Wisdom Schools to distinguish them from the New Wisdom Schools of the Mahayana. Of these, far the largest and best known is the Theravada, the Teaching of the Elders. In this Chapter, itself analysed into Sutras, basic teachings, some parables, and groups of extracts under headings, will appear the foundations of Buddhism. Two further Sermons represent two other sects of the earlier School. Then we turn to the larger group of schools of the Mahayana, or great Vehicle (of Salvation), many of which are later but some contemporaneous with the Old Wisdom Schools. These are divided into India, China and Japan, and Tibet. Finally, I have chosen three subjects as deserving separate treatment, however brief; Concentration and Meditation, the Buddhist Order (Sangha) and Nirvana.

Each item is numbered; its source is given, in code form, at the end. The following pages give the works which correspond to the code reference, and the reader will in this way be able to find with the minimum trouble the exact source of the quotation. A brief Glossary and an Index complete a work which it is hoped will introduce a new range of readers to the Buddhist Way of Life, which is inseparable from the Wisdom of Buddhism. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Edward Conze for constant advice during the compilation of this Anthology, for his special translation of No. 87, for permission to use his translations for so many of these items, and for his kindness in finding time in the midst of his own writing to look through the entire manuscript. I am also most grateful to the many members of the Buddhist Society who have typed long extracts for me, and retyped my own still lamentable typing. In particular I must mention Miss Marianne Winder, who is largely

responsible for the Glossary, and Dr. Irmgard Schloegl, and Mr. Maurice O'C. Walshe, who helped me greatly with some of the Pali extracts.

*St. John's Wood,*

*. December, 1959.*

As a practising Buddhist, I can confidently recommend this book to all who want to read a good introductory account of Buddhism. As president of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, I am grateful to the author for making known the Teaching of the Buddha to a wider audience. This will bring about better understanding of Buddhism in the world, which is one of the aims of the WFB.

Poon Dilkil.

Bangkok  
Magha Puja 2508  
*16th February 1965*

# Introduction

Buddhism is a Western term for what in the East is known as the Buddha-Dharma. Dharma (in Pali: Dhamma) is a Sanskrit word of many meanings but here means the Teaching which in turn sprang from the Enlightenment of the Buddha.

The phrase 'the Wisdom of Buddhism' covers a wide field, including the Wisdom of Gautama the Buddha and that of the leading minds among his followers who through the centuries have achieved that Wisdom from their own spiritual experience. The process continues, for the Wisdom of Buddhism is a living entity.

Gautama Siddhartha was a man who attained supreme Enlightenment by fusing his consciousness with the Buddha-principle within, which is in turn a reflection of the Absolute All-mind. The Buddha, a title meaning the fully Enlightened or Awakened One, is thus a concept at three levels, cosmic, mystical and human, and the word may bear these different meanings according to the School or context in which it occurs. But the middle meaning, that of an indwelling Buddhahood, is common ground to every Buddhist; all men can attain the full Enlightenment achieved in history by one, and there is a Way, the Buddha's Middle Way, from what we unknowingly are to what we shall be when we achieve in fullest consciousness that Cosmic awareness which, by whatever name described, is the goal of the mind's development.

Thus the fact that Gautama the Indian prince became *Buddha* is the heart of Buddhism, and Buddhism, though today an enormous system of thought and doctrine, is essentially the Way to the same Enlightenment. As to the nature of that experience, we shall know it when we achieve it and not before. We may speculate about it, approach it by dialectic, analogy or poetic symbol, but only when the last barriers of thought and the last stain of duality have been transcended shall we, in a 'moment' beyond time, beyond all error KNOW.

Buddhism, then, is at once a body of doctrine and a way. The doctrine can never be understood until applied in personal practice; the Way can never be trodden successfully unless the mind is first

conditioned to right ways of thinking and a right understanding of the laws of life.

In the later schools of Buddhism the historical Buddha recedes in relative importance, and the Buddha-principle within is of sole concern. An appreciation of the Wisdom of Buddhism, especially that of the Theravada School, would, however, be difficult without some account of the historical Life, which may be summarised as follows.

Gautama Siddhartha was born the son of a Raja of the Sakya clan, of the Ksatriya caste, at Lumbini, now in the south of Nepal, on the full moon of May in a year now widely accepted as 563 B.C. As a boy he led the normal life of ease of his birth and calling. At the age of sixteen he won in a contest of arms his wife Yasodhara, and by her had a son, Rahula, who later entered his father's Order. Of great physical beauty his mind was of equal beauty, and he bade fair to be an outstanding ruler of men when he should succeed to his father's throne. But the story tells of prophecies at birth, that he would either be a spiritual or an earthly king, and his father, wanting an heir to succeed him, did all he could to keep from his son the unpleasant facts of life which might turn his mind to spiritual things. But the growing boy was unusually self-possessed and never satisfied for long with sensuous delights. He was a man with a mission, and the new brain soon became aware of the inward man's high destiny. In spite of his father's efforts the young prince, driving forth from the palace, saw an old man, then a sick man, then a dead man carried by, and at the sight of each he asked the charioteer the meaning of what he saw. 'This comes to all men,' said the charioteer, and the prince was troubled. There was born within him an overwhelming desire to find the cause of so much suffering, to remove that cause and to teach the method of removal to all mankind. He bade farewell to his sleeping wife and babe, and in the silence of the night went forth with his charioteer. At the edge of the forest he cut off his princely hair, exchanged his gorgeous robes with the rags of a beggar, and went forth into the homeless life, alone.

He visited a noted sage, and studied with him, but found no answer to his need. He went to other sages and found the same intellectual subtleties and theories, but not that tearing of the veil

which would alone reveal the cause and cure of the world's suffering. He meditated for six long years, wasting his body to the bone. He conquered fear, subdued the lusts of the flesh, developed and controlled his mind. Finally, he realised that not in extreme austerities was Wisdom to be found. He decided to eat again, and being rested and refreshed, seated himself at the foot of a tree, whose descendant stands today, and vowed not to move until he had attained supreme Enlightenment. He was tempted, assailed with all the remaining impurities of his human mind. He passed in review his former births, their cause and consequent suffering. He shed the self which binds man to his limitations, and raised his consciousness to the very threshold of that Light which lies beyond all thought, all concept-building, all duality. Finally, as all the earth was silent at the moment of full moon, he broke through the final barrier. Self was merged in all-SELF, consciousness was now coeval with the universe; a human mind, in full Enlightenment, was utterly and limitlessly free. For seven days he rested, a new Buddha, and resisted the temptations of Mara, the Evil One, to keep to himself the knowledge which would set men free. The great God Brahma pleaded with him. 'There are beings whose eyes are scarcely darkened with any dust. There will be some who will understand.' And the All-Compassionate One had pity on mankind.

The Buddha began his ministry at Banaras, where, in the deer-park, now restored as such, he preached his First Sermon (see No. 13), to the five ascetics who had left him in disgust when he gave up his austerities. Soon his disciples were so many that he sent them forth to teach the Dhamma, the Buddha-Law, to all mankind (No. 11). Travelling slowly about in North-East India he found a group of fire-worshippers to whom he preached the Fire Sermon (No. 14). King Bimbisara gave him a bamboo-grove to be his permanent retreat. Soon after, his teaching on causation was summarised in a conversation between two leading disciples, and this famous formula, 'Whatsoever is an arising thing, that is a ceasing thing,' became one of the bases of Buddhism (see No. 24).

By now the Buddha's father was longing to see his son, and he returned to the capital, Kapilavastu. His wife, content with her husband's choice of kingdom, entered the Order as soon as women were admitted. Thereafter he moved again about the country-side,

spending the rainy season in one or other of the retreats which were given to the Order. Aristocrat by birth, he was at home with all men, high-caste Brahmans, kings and princes, philosophers, warriors, merchants, beggars, prostitutes and workers in the field. His dignity was unshakable, his humour delightful, his patience with the doubts and fears of others inexhaustible. His task was, first, to reform the prevailing and corrupt form of Brahmanism and to restate eternal truths in a new form; secondly, to simplify the religious life for the 'man in the street,' and to show him a Path which he could understand and tread, for a clear-cut purpose to a definite end. He was a guide, not a God, and in his approach to life the world's first scientist. He called on men to examine phenomena for themselves, and to begin with no assumptions. He called for no faith beyond that which a man who is lost will accord to another who seems to have found the way and offers to point it out. He was always reasonable, and had the ability of all great men of helping every man as it were from his own standpoint. His fund of analogy and parable was inexhaustible, but although he would follow discussion and argument so far, soon he would bring his questioner back to the dominant theme. 'One thing I teach, O Bhikkhus, suffering and deliverance from suffering,' and he refused all questions and argument which did not help towards that end.

During his life there was trouble in the Order of Bhikkhus which he founded, and his own cousin, Devadatta, was as much a thorn in his side as his other cousin, Ananda, was his favourite disciple. But the Order grew, and his fame grew in a land of holy men and noble teaching. For forty-five years he moved about the country, teaching, exhorting, in argument with philosophers, helping the common people to a way of life which would end their suffering. Finally, at the age of eighty he passed away, impressing upon his followers in his final words their first and never-ceasing duty; 'Work out your own salvation, with diligence' (see No. 56). His body was cremated and the ashes buried in twelve burial-mounds. Some of these relics have been found and are now in Buddhist temples, but the power of Buddhism is not in relics or in the teaching of any School. It lies in the peace of heart which comes to those who follow in the footsteps of that mighty mind, the All-Enlightened One, the All-Compassionate One.

It would seem that the Buddha gave his Teaching according to his audience, and therefore at three levels. To the layman he concentrated on ethics, and the basic principles of moral philosophy, with Karma, action-reaction, supplying the sanction for right living in place of the will of an Almighty God. To the Bhikkhus, men (and later women) self-dedicated to the holy life and in many cases of considerable spiritual attainment, he would give the deeper teachings. To the few of outstanding achievement he taught those principles which are themselves spiritual forces, whether working in nature or the mind. If abused, they will wreck the man and, potentially, at least, endanger all mankind. For in the East the deeper truths are only taught from Guru to Chela, teacher to chosen pupil, and always the pupil is accepted as a responsible recipient of such powerful knowledge. These truths, the Doctrine of the Heart, are not for spiritual babes, and we should not expect to find them written down. Yet it may be that these, which are handed down in an oral tradition, are the heart of Buddhism.

To the extent that the teaching could be transmitted openly, attempts were made to fix it at a series of Councils of the Sangha held in the centuries following. But as time went on, and Schools began to form with differing views on emphasis and monastic procedure, these Councils ceased to speak for 'Buddhism,' and the Scriptures which were perhaps the first to be reduced to writing were those of the School which we know today as the Theravada. About the time of Christ the present Canon began to be written down in Ceylon, but allowing for five hundred years of oral transmission and monkish interpolation, emendation and misunderstanding, it would be hard to say just how much of the present Canon would be approved by the Buddha. But the tradition of the School is clear, and tradition is, with respect to the views of orthodox scholars, often more reliable than the latest views of scholastic analysis. Here at least is a clear tradition of a practical, testable, profound and to millions sufficient teaching, a moral philosophy which, if applied, would lead any man a long way and some, it may be, the whole way, to Enlightenment.

And this Teaching of the Elders contains within it the seeds of all later development. The succeeding Schools can be placed on the spokes of a wheel whose hub is the Theravada, and the differences

are largely a complementary shift of emphasis and the raising of the level, if that analogy may again be used, on which a particular doctrine is taught. What happened with the concept of Buddha happened with many a doctrine, and the 'no-self' (Anatta), for example, of the Theravadins became the Void of the Mahayana Schools. Likewise the seeds of compassion in the Theravada, which is primarily concerned with the perfection of the individual, grew into the doctrine of the Bodhisattva and his ideal of compassion for all humanity.

Which of the two main Schools is historically the older is of little importance to the average reader, and may be left to scholastic argument. There is evidence to show that some of the Mahayana texts are at least as old as any surviving portion of the Pali Canon of Ceylon, yet the exact relationship between the two main Schools of Buddhism may never be known. But we do know that the Buddha's Message in one form or another was carried far beyond the confines of its native India; south to Ceylon, where the son of the Buddhist Emperor Asoka founded the Dhamma in the third century B.C.; south-east to Burma, Cambodia and Thailand, where the Mahayana, the first to arrive, was later supplanted by the Theravada School; east along the trade routes into China, and thence through Korea to Japan, and north into Tibet and Mongolia.

And as Buddhism expanded into more and more countries, and was therefore expressed in their languages, so did the scope of its thought expand accordingly. The East does not use the West's analysis of the individual human mind, and makes no sharp division between its many activities. To the Buddhist every mind is a facet of Mind-Only, and all phenomena are, in the last awareness, found to be 'falsely imagined.' This Essence of Mind, which dwells in every mind, is expressed in functions and types of activity which we in the West insist on 'analysing out' into their several pigeon-holes. By this procedure Buddhism is shown to be far more than a religion as it is usually described. Indeed, by most accepted standards it is not a religion at all, for it lacks a personal yet Absolute God, a soul which is immortal, and a body of priests whose task it is to assist the God to save the soul. But it does contain a magnificent system of metaphysics, great heights of philosophy, a school of mysticism, a system of psychology in part unrivalled in the West,

and schools of ritual and magic which have knowledge of nature's forces not yet known to science. It also possesses its own epistemology, ontology and aesthetics, and its own brand of religion which is bound up with what the West calls sociology. And this body of knowledge is crowned with a school of direct Attainment which has no par in the field of spiritual endeavour.

To summarise the history of these many Schools and developments of thought would here be impossible, and to say but little would be to mislead. Nor is it possible here to summarise the Wisdom of Buddhism, for such a summary would be so bald as to be valueless, and why should I put my own mind between the reader and the Scriptures which are here to read? I would at the most conclude with mention of seven principles, more fully developed in the Introduction to my Penguin *Buddhism*. Taking the vast field of Buddhism as a whole, these seven at least are found, in germinal or in developed form, in the great range of country and language, school and time comprised in the Wisdom of Buddhism.

1. Gautama became the Buddha when he became *buddha*, fully awakened, enlightened, made aware. All forms of Buddhism, therefore, are intimately and in the long run solely concerned with this complete, and to our knowledge ultimate spiritual experience. It is to the Buddhist the test of all teaching (see No. 23) that it does or does not conduce to the achievement of the like experience. The Wisdom achieved by enlightenment is the sole purpose of all study, of all morality and the sole end of all progress on the Middle Way. It is the *buddh* in Buddhism.

2. All is Mind-Only, and all in our relative world, though relatively true, is finally seen to be 'falsely imagined.' From the Inconceivable comes the One, and the One, by all not yet enlightened is seen as two, the countless 'pairs of opposites' on which phenomena, events and thoughts are founded. At the heart of each of these opposites, as of every thing, is its 'thingness,' its Suchness (Tathata), that which makes it what it is and yet remains entire, unchangeable. As the Essence of Mind, this Suchness is the total and indivisible Store-Consciousness compared with which our individual points of consciousness are as candles to the sun. And all these things and thoughts alike are Void, that is, they have no being

save in the utterly interdiffused omnipresence of an Absolute which, having no particulars, is Void. Hence the tremendous saying that in pure experience Samsara, the world of becoming, and Nirvana, the World beyond Change, are utterly and undistinguishably One. To the Buddhist, therefore, all emphasis in every school is on the mind, that of the individual, which is essentially that of the whole; which is in turn but a manifestation of All-mind. The individual mind can by development and meditation achieve in full awareness that consciousness which lies behind duality, of Non-duality, a condition before the division into two takes place, that Void of Suchness, or Cosmic Consciousness which the Buddhists call Nirvana. And this 'break through' can happen here and now, in the world of men, and need not be sought in any heaven.

3. There is no self in man, however spelt or described, which is unchanging and his alone. The self or soul exists as a convenient concept to describe an ever-changing bundle of characteristics, each the product of innumerable past causes, which moves in the illusion of time towards Nirvana. The Buddha analysed the components of the personality (see Nos. 33-4) and proved each to be empty. What lies beyond, which has immortal being as the soul of man? Nothing, said the Mahayanists, who carried this Theravada doctrine of no-self to its uttermost conclusion. Nothing we know, the self or an atom or a thought, exists save as a momentary knot in the flow of circumstances, a fleeting confluence of a million causes which is immediately changed by a thousand more, and found to have no abiding substance. Matter has no lasting form; all forms are empty; each and every thing and thought about it is falsely imagined. To believe in an abiding self is worse than illusion; it is the folly which produces desire for this self and its separative requirements, which is in turn the cause of suffering.

4. All things, all men and all events are interrelated and 'interdiffused.' All life is one, though its perishable forms are innumerable. Whether this 'life' be viewed as Suchness, or the Void or as the Essence of Mind it is a factor common to all forms. It follows that all these forms are intimately interrelated, whether the links be seen as cause-effect, in that every cause must affect every other form, or as Compassion, the twin of Wisdom in Buddhist thought, which springs from that flame of the Wisdom in each heart (Bodhicitta)

which knows all life as one and acts accordingly. For the total form of the universe is to the Buddhist harmony, and when this harmony is broken by a part-seeking act two things must follow: first, the causer of the disturbance must, at whatever cost of suffering, restore the harmony; and secondly, all else that lives, and there is no thing dead, will feel compassion for the suffering of the disturber. These three interwoven concepts, harmony, cause-effect and compassion are basic to Buddhism, and the force of compassion is that which actuates the life of the Bodhisattva (see No. 95).

5. Causality, using this term in its widest sense for the Buddhist doctrine of cause-effect, replaces as the cosmic force effecting each man's 'destiny' the Western concept of God. If the manifested universe is an exquisitely adjusted harmony, then nature's justice is absolute, and a man will indeed be punished by his sins, not for them, and receive rewards appropriate. The interrelation of cause-effect was early made the basis of much of the Buddha's teaching and men were advised to live accordingly, and this is the basis of 'work out your own salvation with diligence,' the Buddha's dying words (see No. 56); for only in the certainty that 'As ye sow, so shall ye also reap' can a man develop his character and plan his spiritual advancement, knowing that no force in the universe, whether personified or not, could stay that progress on the Way. Only thus can self be slowly killed, and the growing consciousness be expanded into that 'moment' when this too dies in 'unimpeded interdiffusion with all particulars,' in the undifferentiated and at the same time 'No-self consciousness' of Nirvana.

6. The Way of Buddhism is a Middle Way between all extremes. This is no weak compromise, but a sweet reasonableness which avoids fanaticism and laziness with equal care, and marches onward without that haste which brings its own reaction, but without ceasing. The Buddha called it the Noble Eightfold Path to Nirvana, and it may be regarded as the noblest course of spiritual training yet presented, in such a simple form, to man. For it involves not only right understanding of basic principles and right motive for treading the Path, but right morality and then right mental training up to the very threshold of Nirvana. And it is intimately and in all Schools linked with doctrine, whether these principles are what the West would call philosophy, psychology or religion. In the words

of the *Dhammapada* (see No. 15) 'You yourself must make the effort; Buddhas do but point the way.' Nowhere more than in Buddhism is application so involved in learning. Buddhism is not a mere system of doctrine; it is a Way of life.

7. 'Look within; thou art Buddha.' Thus *The Voice of the Silence* (see No. 125), and it completes the cycle of Buddhist principles. Here is the power and certainty that each man will in the end attain the Awakening reached by the All-Enlightened One. Nought is needed save the unceasing journey from what we seem to be to what we are, from desire to peace. This wholeness of the total man aware of his own entirety is the Goal of the Buddhist path. The reunion may be achieved by countless means or devices, by widely differing methods of that self-development which is the end of self. In all, wide learning and sound morality must be crowned with more, a development of the mind which leads, by slow and weary steps to that sudden Awakening, that timeless 'moment' when the Absolute and the relative are utterly 'interdiffused' beyond all difference. From thought to No-thought, from individual mind to No-mind, this is the journey, and the end is liberation, from all fetters, stains and insufficiency, in a here and now that today we cannot comprehend. They only know the heights who walk them. Meanwhile, obedient to the words of a Zen Master, let us 'Walk on!'

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE BUDDHA

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- 3 HIS THREE BODIES
- 4-6 THE TRUTH-FINDER AS A WAY-SHOWER
- 7 THE BUDDHA'S PITY
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*AS already indicated, the Buddha may be considered as appearing in the Buddhist fields at three levels; as a Cosmic Principle, as the Buddhic Principle within each mind, and as the human being who in the sixth century B.C. achieved the office of Buddhahood for this present era. Nos. 1 and 2 describe the first aspect. No. 3 gives one version of many of the doctrine of Three Bodies, whereby the Buddha is at the same time the Dharmakaya, or body of Truth, the Sambhogakaya or body of Enjoyment, which is, as it were, half way down the ladder of pure Spirit into matter, and a Nirmanakaya, the 'phantom' body in which he works on earth for mankind. Nos. 4-6 describe the Buddha as the shower of the Way to Nirvana; No. 7 is a lovely poem on his compassion, and Nos. 8-10' speak of the Buddha within.*

## I THE UNBORN

There is, O Bhikkhus, an Unborn, a Not-become, a Not-made, a Not-compounded. If there were not, O Bhikkhus, this Unborn, Not-become, Not-made, Not-compounded, there could not be any escape from what is born, become, made and compounded.

But since, O Bhikkhus, there is this Unborn, therefore is there made known an escape from what is born, become, made and compounded.

## 2 THE COSMIC BUDDHA

The Cosmic Body of the Buddha is real; his Human Bodies are phenomenal, and shaped as they are needed in each case. How to understand this? To one who sees things as they really are, all illusions which he had formerly acquired vanish forever; in that moment his earthly career ends. Beyond the Three Worlds he lives in solitary bliss; in union with Cosmic Order he haunts the shapeless. This very shapelessness enables him to assume any shape; his very separation from the world places him in the very midst of it. Though he is able to assume any shape, the actual shape is determined by our expectations. The Buddha cannot shape his Human Bodies; as a shadow answers a form, so he appears. His stature may be minute or enormous; his life may be long or short—these are reflections of the Buddha, produced by the expectations of various Beings; his Real Body is not among them.

## 3 HIS THREE BODIES

Within our Essence of Mind these Three Bodies of the Buddha are to be found, and they are common to everybody. Because the mind (of an ordinary man) labours under delusions, he knows not his own inner nature; and the result is that he ignores the Three Bodies within himself (erroneously believing) that they are to be sought from without.

Now what is the Pure Dharmakaya?

Our Essence of Mind is intrinsically pure; all things are only its manifestations, and good deeds and evil deeds are only the result

of good thoughts and evil thoughts respectively. Thus, within the Essence of Mind all things (are intrinsically pure) like the azure of the sky and the radiance of the sun and the moon which, when obscured by passing clouds, may appear as if their brightness had been dimmed; but as soon as the clouds are blown away, brightness reappears and all objects are fully illuminated. Learned Audience, our evil habits may be likened unto the clouds; while sagacity and wisdom are the sun and the moon respectively. When we attach ourselves to outer objects, our Essence of Mind is clouded by wanton thoughts which prevent our Sagacity and Wisdom from sending forth their light. But should we be fortunate enough to find learned and pious teachers to make known to us the orthodox Dharma, then we may with our own efforts do away with ignorance and delusion, so that we are enlightened both within and without, and the (true nature) of all things manifests itself within our Essence of Mind.

What is the Perfect Sambhogakaya? Let us take the illustration of a lamp. Even as the light of a lamp can break up darkness which has been there for a thousand years, so a spark of Wisdom can do away with ignorance which has lasted for ages. Good and evil are opposite to each other, but their quintessence cannot be dualistic. This non-dualistic nature is called the true nature, which can neither be contaminated by evil nor affected by good. To realise our own Essence of Mind from moment to moment without intermission until we attain Supreme Enlightenment, so that we are perpetually in a state of Right Mindfulness, is the Sambhogakaya.

Now what is the myriad Nirmanakaya? When we subject ourselves to the least discrimination or particularisation, transformation takes place; otherwise all things remain as void as space, as they inherently are. By dwelling our mind on evil things hell arises; by dwelling our mind on good acts heaven appears. Numerous indeed are the transformations of the Essence of Mind. People under delusion awake not and understand not; always they bend their minds on evil, and as a rule practise evil. But should they turn their minds from evil to righteousness, even for a moment, Prajna would instantly arise. This is what is called the Nirmanakaya of the Buddha of the Essence of Mind.

## .4 THE TRUTH-FINDER AS A WAY-SHOWER

A Truth-finder, monks, one perfected, fully awakened, causes a Way to arise which had not arisen before; he brings about a Way not brought about before; he proclaims a Way not proclaimed before. He is a knower of the Way, understander of the Way, skilled in the Way. And now his disciples, monks, are wayfarers who follow after him. This is the distinction, the specific feature which distinguishes a Truth-finder, a perfected one, a fully awakened one, from a monk who is freed by wisdom.

## 5

The world, brethren, hath been fully understood by the Tathagata: from the world the Tathagata is set free.

The arising of the world, brethren, hath been fully understood by the Tathagata: the arising of the world hath been put away by the Tathagata.

The ceasing of the world, brethren, hath been fully understood by the Tathagata: the ceasing of the world hath been realised by the Tathagata.

The Way going to the ceasing of the world hath been fully understood by the Tathagata: the way leading to the ceasing of the world hath been practised (traversed) by the Tathagata.

As a Tathagata speaks, so he does: as he does, so he speaks. Thus, since he does as he says, and says as he does, therefore is he called Tathagata.

## 6

A Truth-finder does not say anything that he knows to be not a fact, untrue, not connected with the goal, and which is also displeasing and disagreeable to others; he does not say anything that he knows to be a fact, true, but not connected with the goal and also displeasing and disagreeable to others. But if a Truth-finder knows something to be a fact, true, connected with the goal, although it is displeasing and disagreeable to others, then he knows the right time when it may be stated. A Truth-finder does not say anything that is not a fact, untrue, not connected with the goal even

if it is pleasing and agreeable to others; and he does not say anything that is a fact, true, but not connected with the goal and which is pleasing and agreeable to others. But if a Truth-finder knows something to be a fact, true, connected with the goal and which is pleasing and agreeable to others, then the Truth-finder knows the right time when it may be stated. What is the reason? A Truth-finder has compassion for all beings.

## 7 THE BUDDHA'S PITY

My children,

The Enlightened One, because he saw Mankind drowning in the Great Sea of Birth, Death and Sorrow, and longed to save them,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw the men of the world straying in false paths, and none to guide them,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw that they lay wallowing in the mire of the Five Lusts, in dissolute abandonment,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw them still fettered to their wealth, their wives and their children, knowing not how to cast them aside,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw them doing evil with hand, heart and tongue, and many times receiving the bitter fruits of sin, yet ever yielding to their desires,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw that they slaked the thirst of the Five Lusts as it were with brackish water,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw that though they longed for happiness, they made for themselves no karma of happiness; and though they hated pain, yet willingly made for themselves a karma of pain: and though they coveted the joys of Heaven, would not follow his commandments on earth,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw them afraid of birth, old-age and death, yet still pursuing the works that lead to birth, old-age and death,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw them consumed by the fires of pain and sorrow,  
yet knowing not where to seek the still waters of Samadhi,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw them living in an evil time, subjected to tyrannous  
kings and suffering many ills, yet heedlessly following after  
pleasure,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw them living in a time of wars, killing and wound-  
ing one another: and knew that for the riotous hatred that had  
flourished in their hearts they were doomed to pay an endless  
retribution,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because many born at the time of his incarnation had heard him  
preach the Holy Law, yet could not receive it,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because some had great riches which they could not bear to give  
away,

For this he was moved to pity.

Because he saw the men of the world ploughing their fields,  
sowing the seed, trafficking, huckstering, buying and selling: and  
at the end winning nothing but bitterness,

For this he was moved to pity.

## 8. THE BUDDHA WITHIN

Within the domain of our mind there is a Tathagata of Enlighten-  
ment who sends forth a powerful light which illumines externally  
the six gates (of sensation) and purifies them. This light is strong  
enough to pierce through the six heavens of desire, and when it is  
turned inwardly to the Essence of Mind it eliminates at once  
the three poisonous elements, purges away our sin which might  
lead us to the hells, and enlightens us thoroughly within and  
without.

## 9

Within our mind there is a Buddha, and that Buddha within is the  
real Buddha. If Buddha is not to be sought within our mind, where

shall we find the real Buddha? Doubt not that a Buddha is within your mind, apart from which nothing can exist.

## IO

Avert thy face from world deceptions; mistrust thy senses, they are false. But within thy body, the shrine of thy sensations, seek in the impersonal for the 'Eternal Man,' and having sought him out, look inward; thou art Buddha.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE OLD WISDOM SCHOOLS

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*SOON* after the Buddha's final Nirvana his followers began to split up into various groups and sub-groups, some forming round an exceptionally able teacher, and others, judging by the names given them, being attached to a locality. Soon there were some eighteen such groups, and these, according to an early list, could be regarded as sub-divisions of four. Of these the most influential were the Sarvastivadins, much of whose Scriptures survives today. A second group were the Sammitiyas, who held unorthodox views on the nature of self. A third school were the Mahasanghikas, from which the Mahayana School historically derives, and the fourth were the Sthaviras (Pali: Theras or Elders), known today as the Theravada School, or Teaching of the Elders, which alone of the eighteen groups survives today with a complete Canon. Although its literature is no older than much of the surviving material of the later Mahayana School, this Theravada School of Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia is historically the oldest surviving organised School of Buddhism.

Its Scriptures, written in Pali and now available in English are therefore given first, for in them may be found the basic principles common to all schools of Buddhism. The subject being very large I have presented it partly in complete Suttas (Skt: Sutras) or Sermons, and Parables, and partly under subject headings. To reduce the size of this Introduction, and for greater convenience to the reader I have added further notes at the head of some of the subjects. Readers will note that in many cases Buddhist terms are here given in their Pali form. Later in the volume, when the Mahayana Scriptures are presented, there will be a throw-back to the earlier Sanskrit form. Thus Dhamma becomes Dharma, and Kamma, Karma, although the Sanskrit terms are the original and the Pali form derived.

No. 11 contains the whole duty of the Buddhist as to the Way; to proclaim it as he understands it. It is for the hearer to accept it or not as he will. No. 12 is a famous summary of the Buddha's teaching. Nos. 13 and 14 are the Buddha's first two Sermons, slightly condensed. No. 15 is a lengthy extract from the most famous of all Scriptures of this School, the Dhammapada.

## 11 'GO YE FORTH, O BHIKKHUS!'

Go ye forth, brethren, on your journey, for the profit of the many, for the bliss of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the profit, the bliss of devas and mankind!

Go not any two together. Proclaim, brethren, the Dhamma, goodly in its beginning, goodly in its middle, goodly in its ending. Both in the spirit and in the letter do ye make known the all-perfected, utterly pure righteous life. There are beings with but little dust of passion on their eyes. They are perishing through not hearing the Dhamma. There will be some who will understand.

## 12 THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING

Cease to do evil;  
Learn to do good;  
Cleanse your own heart;  
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.

## 13 THE FIRST SERMON

Thus have I heard: once the Exalted One was dwelling near Benares, at Isipatana, in the Deer-Park.

Then the Exalted One thus spake unto the company of five monks. 'Monks, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth as a wanderer. What two?'

'Devotion to the pleasures of sense, a low practice of villagers, a practice unworthy, unprofitable, the way of the world (on the one hand); and (on the other) devotion to self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy and unprofitable.'

'By avoiding these two extremes the Tathagata has gained knowledge of that middle path which giveth vision, which giveth knowledge, which causeth calm, special knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbana.'

'And what, monks, is that middle path which giveth vision . . . Nibbana?'

'Verily it is this Ariyan eightfold way, to wit: Right view, right aim, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right

mindfulness, right concentration. This, monks, is that middle path which giveth vision, which giveth knowledge, which causeth calm, special knowledge, enlightenment, Nibbana.

‘Now this, monks, is the Ariyan truth about Ill:

‘Birth is Ill, decay is Ill, sickness is Ill, death is Ill: likewise sorrow and grief, woe, lamentation and despair. To be conjoined with things which we dislike: to be separated from things which we like,—that also is Ill. Not to get what one wants—that also is Ill. In a word, this body, this five-fold mass which is based on grasping—that is Ill.

‘Now this, monks, is the Ariyan truth about the arising of Ill:

‘It is that craving that leads back to birth, along with the lure and the lust that lingers longingly now here, now there: namely, the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving to be born again, the craving for existence to end. Such, monks, is the Ariyan truth about the arising of Ill.

‘And this, monks, is the Ariyan truth about the ceasing of Ill:

‘Verily it is the utter passionless cessation of, the giving up, the forsaking, the release from, the absence of longing for this craving.

‘Now this, monks, is the Ariyan truth about the practice that leads to the ceasing of Ill:

‘Verily it is this Ariyan eightfold way, to wit: Right views, right aim, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

‘Monks, at the thought of this Ariyan truth of Ill, concerning things unlearnt before, there arose in me vision, insight, understanding: there arose in me wisdom, there arose in me light.

‘Monks, at the thought: This Ariyan truth about Ill is to be understood—concerning things unlearnt before, there arose in me vision, insight, understanding: there arose in me wisdom, there arose in me light.

‘Monks, at the thought: This Ariyan truth about Ill has been understood (by me)—concerning things unlearnt before, there arose in me vision, insight, understanding: there arose in me wisdom, there arose in me light.

‘Again, monks, at the thought of this Ariyan truth about the arising of Ill, concerning things unlearnt before, there arose in me

vision, insight, understanding: there arose in me wisdom, there arose in me light.

‘At the thought: This arising of Ill is to be put away—concerning things unlearnt before . . . there arose in me light.

‘At the thought: This arising of Ill has been put away—concerning things unlearnt before . . . there arose in me light.

‘Again, monks, at the thought of this Ariyan truth about the ceasing of Ill, concerning things unlearnt before . . . there arose in me light.

‘At the thought: This ceasing of Ill must be realised—concerning things unlearnt before . . . there arose in me light.

‘At the thought: This Ariyan truth about the ceasing of Ill has been realised—concerning things unlearnt before . . . there arose in me light.

‘Again, monks, at the thought of this Ariyan truth about the practice leading to the ceasing of Ill, concerning things unlearnt before . . . there arose in me light.

‘At the thought: This Ariyan truth about the practice leading to the ceasing of Ill must be cultivated—concerning things unlearnt before . . . there arose in me light.

‘At the thought: This Ariyan truth about the practice leading to the ceasing of Ill has been cultivated—concerning things unlearnt before there arose in me vision, insight, understanding: there arose in me wisdom, there arose in me light.

‘Now, monks, so long as my knowledge and insight of these thrice revolved twelvefold Ariyan truths, in their essential nature, was not quite purified—so long was I not sure that in this world there was one enlightenment with supreme enlightenment.

‘But, monks, so soon as my knowledge and insight of these thrice revolved twelvefold Ariyan truths, in their essential nature, was quite purified, then, monks, was I assured what it is to be enlightened with supreme enlightenment. Now knowledge and insight have arisen in me so that I know. Sure is my heart’s release. This is my last birth. There is no more becoming for me.’

## 14 THE FIRE SERMON

All things, O Bhikkhus, are on fire.

The eye, O Bhikkhus, is on fire; forms are on fire; eye-consciousness is on fire; impressions received by the eye are on fire; and whatever sensation, pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent, originates in dependence on impressions received by the eye, that also is on fire.

And with what are these on fire?

With the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of infatuation; with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation misery, grief and despair are they on fire.

The ear is on fire; sounds are on fire . . . the nose is on fire, odours are on fire; . . . the tongue is on fire; tastes are on fire; . . . mind-consciousness is on fire; impressions received by the mind are on fire; and whatever sensation, pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent, originates in dependence on impressions received by the mind, that also is on fire.

And with what are these on fire?

With the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of infatuation; with birth, old age, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair are they on fire.

Perceiving this, O Bhikkhus, the learned and noble disciple conceives an aversion for the eye, for forms, for eye-consciousness, for the impressions received by the eye; and whatever sensation, pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent, originates in dependence on impressions received by the eye, for that also he conceives an aversion . . . And in conceiving this aversion, he becomes divested of passion, and by the absence of passion he becomes free, and when he is free he becomes aware that he is free; and he knows that rebirth is exhausted, that he has lived the holy life, that he has done what it behoved him to do, and that he is no more for this world.

## 15 FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

*The Twin Verses*

1. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts and made up of our thoughts. If a man

dangers of existence present themselves. This ostrich-like behaviour does not, unfortunately, remove these sources of dukkha.(1)

The Enlightened One continues, “*To be joined with what one dislikes is dukkha*” and its opposite: “*To be separated from what one likes is dukkha.*” These two conditions are for most people constant companions throughout their lives. Things never seem to be exactly right and either we get what we do not want or lack what we like. Lord Buddha is pointing out to us here that by following our likes and dislikes, which are, after all, endless, we shall not experience a happiness with any lasting value. All we get out of this, is further frustration and mounting tension at the opposite poles of hatred and desire. Never can we find, however hard we search throughout all the possible states of becoming, any stable situation where all unliked things (people, circumstances etc.) are excluded, and all desired things are present, there is always, if we examine situation carefully, some fly or other in the ointment.

“*Not to get what one wants is dukkha*”. It is a particularly dense delusion which supposes that if all one’s wants could be fulfilled, one would be happy. There are a few people who are in the position of being able so to indulge themselves but these men, millionaires and the like, are not known to be the happiest of mankind. Such people are able to get what they want *materially* but what of their bodily and mental conditions? In common with the rest of humanity

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(1) What has been said here should be sufficient to clear Buddhism of the charge sometimes levelled against it, of Pessimism. Salvation in Buddhism is aided by a true understanding of life in this world and for this, notice has to be taken of suffering. But this, it must be repeated, is a *Method* to teach us and certainly does not mean that unsatisfactory experience is an ultimate truth of the world as pessimism teaches. In addition, this is only a part though an important one, of the Buddha’s Teachings and many very positive formulations exist for the increase of the skillful in our nature — See II, (the Three Trainings) and III, (the Ten Perfections).

poorer than they, even millionaires are not able to order, 'Let no worry, trouble, difficulty, disease, old age, death, (or birth) come near me! These facets of experience are not to be controlled by a large purse, nor by a small one but only by ordering the mind.' It is again a common experience for the great majority of people not to get what they want. Their desires remain unsatisfied and even when they are able to have what they want, they find that they do not really experience any lasting pleasure. Pleasure from 'wanted' things is transitory (one no longer has the titillation of 'wanting' what is not yet possessed) and in any case objects of desire are impermanent. 'Satisfying' desires through possessing the objects of desire has been likened by Lord Buddha to a man who drinks salt water to satisfy his thirst.

"*The Five Heaps of attachment are dukkha.*" These 'heaps' refer to a particular way of analyzing our total personality that is into Body, Feelings, Recognitions, Habit-tendencies and Discrimination. To all these we are attached, for they have all been grasped at when we last came to conception. We have grasped at human-heaps according to the results of our actions (See: Actions and Results) and identify *ourselves* not only with the body but variously with the other mental heaps as well. Other beings have grasped after animal-heaps, the heaps which exist in a god's life, and so forth, but always there is this grasping and clinging tightly to what we quite deludedly think of as 'me' and 'mine.' This grasping extends through all sorts of life and is the fundamental wrong, the great mistake from which all our various troubles stem. To take a single instance, easily provable, of whether the heaps of clinging are dukkha or not: Resolve, reader of this book, as soon as you are in suitable surroundings, to sit *still* for, say, one hour. Just observe what happens: After five minutes a fly settles on your face and you want to brush it off, after quarter of an hour, there is an irritation on your leg—you want to scratch it, after twenty-five minutes you

feel a crick in your neck and want to move it and you may give up after half-an-hour or so when many joints begin to ache, or one's feet go to sleep—or something similar. By jigging around all day and keeping the body in motion, we manage to avoid experiencing the dukkha associated with it (we experience other dukkha instead). Consider Lord Buddha though, who could sit down for seven days and without moving enjoy absolute bliss from his practice of meditation. Much the same is true of many great meditation experts now alive, they do not find their bodies (or the other heaps) cause much trouble, but then such sages have removed grasping and clinging from their minds.

But, one can almost hear readers protest: There are many enjoyable, beautiful things in life. It is true in a relative and limited sense that many things are enjoyable and beautiful (see the section on Perversions). Regarding this, two facts should be considered.

1.) experiences can only be so regarded if one skims over the surface of life without examining it properly.

2.) pleasure derived from them is *relative* since arising dependent on many factors (enjoying a film, depends on electricity, celluloid, a projection camera, its operator, a screen, light, one's eyes, eye-consciousness – the list can be continued to infinity.) It is *limited* because it begins at a certain time and in certain surroundings and finishes some-time later. The highest type of delight in this world (whatever one variously considers that to be), must therefore come to an end, after which, it being, according to one's preference, the highest pleasure, it must necessarily be succeeded in one's experience by a lesser delight, indeed if not by actual dukkha. Lord Buddha has pointed out that whatever is impermanent, that also is dukkha. It is therefore true to say that even our pleasures, as they are impermanent and give no lasting satisfaction while positively increasing our craving for further pleasure, are really dukkha.

It must not be thought that this is all down-heartedness, since Lord Buddha has definite reasons for giving dukkha a prominent place in His Teaching. *Firstly*, it is experienced by all, and experience and not dogma therefore stands at the beginning of Buddhism. *Secondly*, being part of experience, it is fatally wrong to try to ignore it as most people do. For instance, it just is not done in the best society to converse frankly about death. One would be thought 'queer' or a religious maniac, and whenever the subject was broached, silence would fall, people become uncomfortable and make hurried excuses for leaving one's undesirable company. All this because inescapable facts are not faced but an attempt made to bury them. *Thirdly*, man generally, as indeed all creatures, continually looks for pleasure and avoids pain, thus busying himself in a little, selfish world of his own, which although the effort is often futile, he tries to order in the way that he desires. *Fourthly*, this leads on to a strengthening of the 'I-feeling' and to making more things 'mine' which is just opposite to the way along which real happiness lies. The five heaps do not contain any 'I' (soul, self, Self etc), and happiness comes from seeing this with insight. *Fifthly*, one has to live in the world with others, who have to be considered: How to make them happy? One can never do this while ideas of 'I', 'mine' and all the resulting complications, remain as strongly rooted delusions in the mind. *Sixthly*, all this dukkha is just unnecessary—there is no need to experience it if only one will give up craving and ignorance. And as these are of a spiritual magnitude re-inforced by an infinity of past lives (see Rebirth) and constantly strengthened in the present by our various desires, so the Lord Buddha has laid out a Path penetrating right into the depths of one's heart. A Path which leads successively through purification by moral observance, mental tranquillity by the practice of meditation, and complete emancipation from all bonds such as ignorance and craving, through insight-wisdom.

So the Buddha instructs thus: 'You are worldlings (i.e. unenlightened) and experience because of blinding ignorance and the impulsion of craving – Impermanence and Unsatisfactory conditions. And you, because of that ignorance and craving, take to believing that people and things, places and circumstance, are themselves permanent and can give you real happiness (see section on Perversions). But I teach that you should not try to avoid seeing that dukkha and impermanence, but actually cultivate your perception of it, so that, in due course you come to understand this dukkha and to fully take it into account. As you are driven on by craving you will, having cultivated the perception of dukkha, come to understand how through that craving, dukkha dependently arises.' That is to say: Where there is craving, there is also dukkha. Realizing this, you will abandon even deep-rooted notions of gaining permanence and happiness in wrong ways: hence my Teaching that one should truly realize – "All compounded things are Impermanent and linked to Unsatisfactoriness" (See I, Three Marks of Existence)

Having done this, you will have accomplished a considerable amount upon the Way of the Buddha. But more is to be done. Merely to have insight into dukkha and its arising is not enough, you must also see its cessation and know through practice, the path that leads to that cessation. This is also the experience of the Highest Happiness which is Nirvāna (co-incident with the cessation of dukkha) and its arising (which due to the limitations of language to describe experience here – *appears* to arise dependently, although Nirvāna being Uncompounded cannot really arise in this way). You will then be a Noble One and perceive, enlightened by Transcendental wisdom, the great Truth of No-self. Hence my Teachings that one should truly realize: "All events are without self" and this is truly Perception of the Void' (see III).

Worldings perceive, or should perceive and are encouraged to see Impermanence and Unsatisfactory conditions so that they begin to relinquish their hold on the world. The perception of the Noble Ones of whom the Buddha is the foremost, is not sullied by ignorance and craving and hence their world is not coloured by Impermanence and Unsatisfactoriness. These only exist for those who cling to the red-hot iron of craving and the great Teachers pity ordinary folk whom they clearly see as deludedly hurting themselves. Out of Compassion for them, they preach the Teaching which emphasizes dukkha, as this is a sure Way for them to go and to discover for themselves how deluded they have been. Therefore the Buddha has taught the Four Noble Truths which are special application of the thread running all through His Teaching: factor 'X' being present, factor 'Y' arises: factor 'X' declining, factor 'Y' declines. This mode of Dependent Origination of Dukkha, well-known throughout Buddhism, is usually stated as follows :

The Noble Truth of Dukkha, (sometimes also translated as unsatisfactoriness.)	}	Dukkha and its arising.
The Noble Truth of the Arising of Dukkha.		
The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Dukkha.	}	Sukha (happiness) and its arising.
The Noble Truth of the Way leading to the Cessation of Dukkha.		

Now all this may seem very straightforward and the only trouble is that while these Noble Truths are easy to learn, all sorts of emotional blockages prevent us realizing what they really mean. For instance, Ad one: We are not aware of the thoroughly unsatisfactory state of much of our life and so do not take the necessary steps to abandon dukkha. Ad two: We are already enmeshed in craving, so that to intellectually agree is not enough, we have to start hewing through the bonds. Regarding three: It seems very far away, very remote, and if

this is our feeling about Nirvāna, it shows how much work we have to do to 'get there' since Nirvāna ultimately is nowhere else but here and now. Ad four: the ordinary person making great efforts, only finds it possible to practise one factor of the Way at a time, whereas for a sage with perfect insight, the observance of the whole Way is natural, no restraints or efforts being needed.

A lot of the misery experienced in this world can thus very easily be avoided if only one realized for oneself, a simple fact: that actions\* have their appropriate results.\*

### **ACTION AND RESULT**

'Actions' are by way of what one does with the body, speaks with tongue or thinks in the mind. Such action is either connected with, or devoid of intention. Again, it is evil in intention, good, or indeterminate. 'Evil' here means: productive of harm to oneself or other beings; 'good' means: actions conducive to one's own or to others' happiness; indeterminate actions are those connected with neither good nor evil. Generally, Buddhists avoid the use of the categories 'good' and 'evil' and prefer to talk instead of 'skillful' and 'unskillful' action,\* as we shall do henceforth.

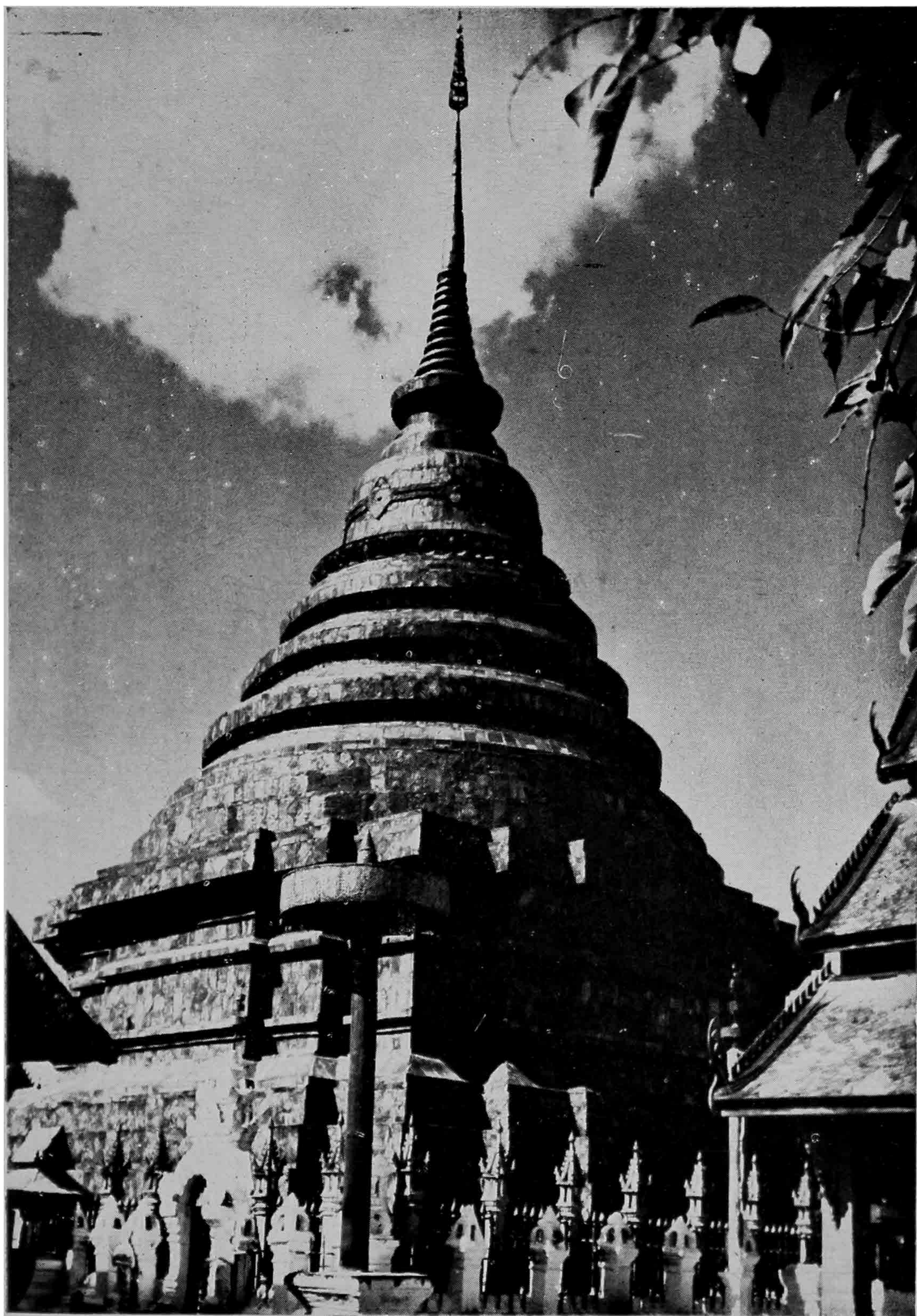
To expand a little on the above categories; of the actions by mind, speech and body, it is those actions of the mind with which we are concerned here since mental action is fundamental to vocal and bodily action. Whether an action is intentional or not is very important in Buddhist practice. Actions which are willed, deliberate, or accompanied by volition, these are potentially productive of a future result (see below). On the other hand, those which are unintentional or unaccompanied by volition, these do not bring about any future result. To illustrate this: Supposing a mosquito settles on a man's arm and he, not liking such an insect, raises his hand and kills it – such is an intentional action with a potential

result. But a man who lies down and unknowingly crushes a mosquito in his pillow-case, has done so without intention: thus his action is without future result. What has been said here about killing applies also to any other harmful action and also beneficial ones. Thus the man who intentionally venerates the Buddha may expect a result from his action, whereas a little boy who copies that man's actions and does not know the significance of such worship, consequently does not perform it intentionally, and hence has no result to expect from it.

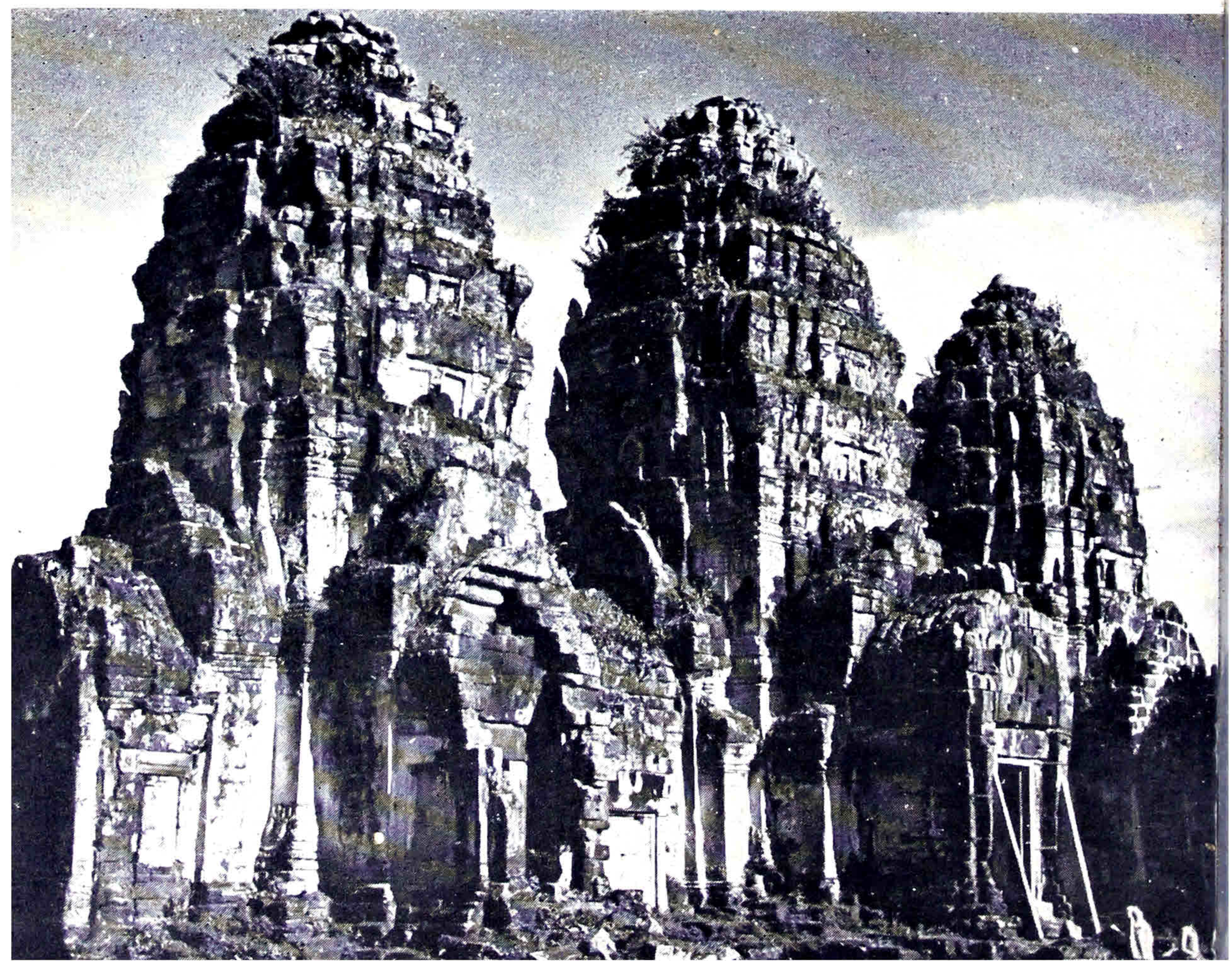
As to results, they are as one might expect: if unskillful seed is sown now, a crop of painful results are to be expected in the future, and conversely, skillful actions are productive of pleasant, happy results. It is indeed as Jesus has taught: "As a man soweth, so shall he reap". From thistle - seed we should not expect a crop of fine apples, so it is very important what actions are initiated in the present, for our future weal or woe is to a large extent dependent on our present. A man, intent only on the accumulation of more and more wealth and regardless of the feelings of others, will, even in this life, develop miserliness in mind, often reflected by his grasping countenance. Another man, sincerely concerned with a religious quest will also develop a mind and outward features reflecting his particular concern. Thus, we should always be aware of whether our minds are pursuing skillful or unskillful matters for even in this life the fruits of action can be seen. In this way arise a great number of the manifold differences between beings in this world. Inequalities (of actual and potential forces) too obvious to need further comment, are seen amongst mankind rich and poor, clever and dull, wise and stupid and so many more. If these inequalities are great, then what of the animals? Action and result operating through the three times of past, present and future, accounts well for many of these differences.

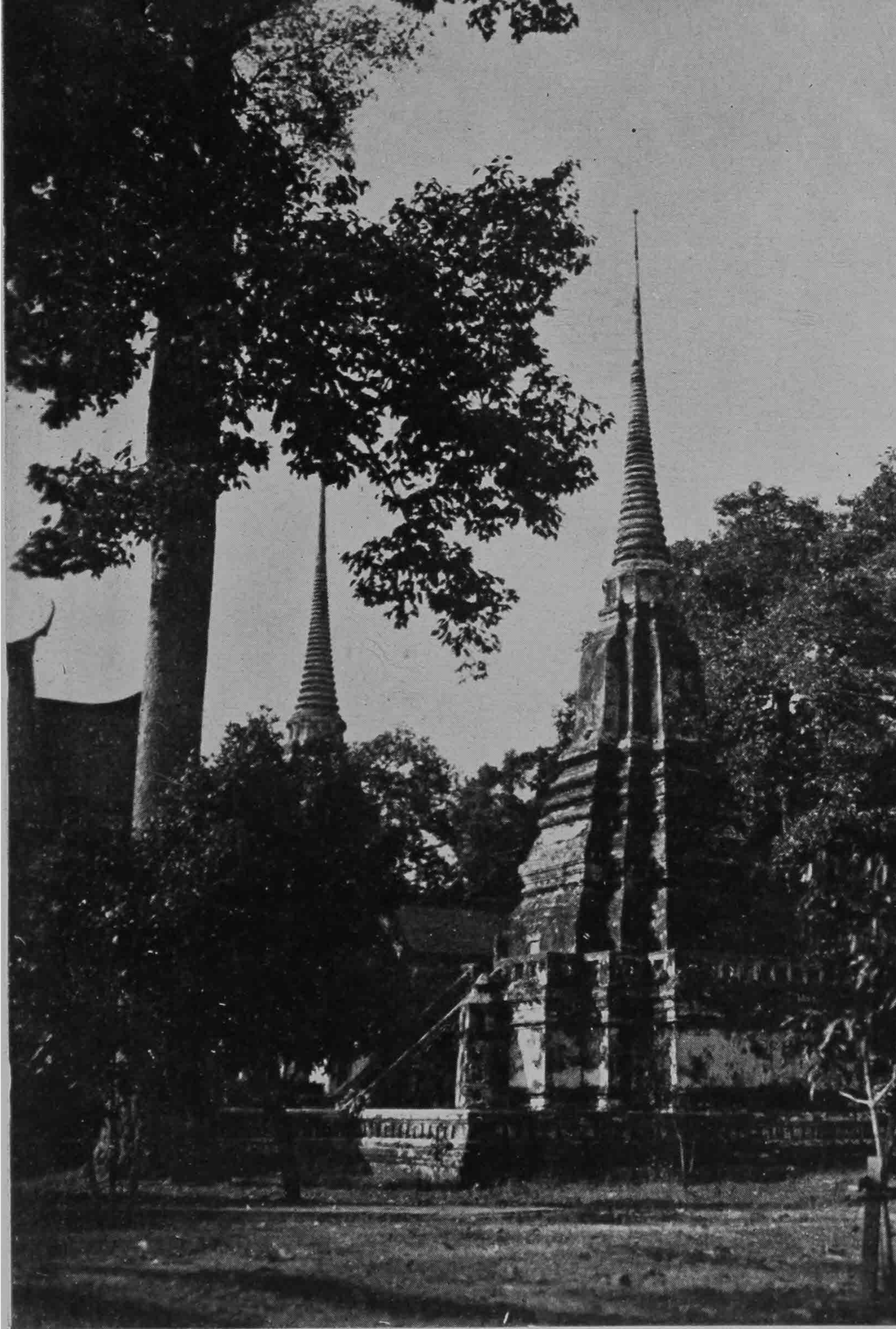
Results are various as to the time - interval between the commission of the action producing them and their fruiting. Some actions are of immediate result and the relationship may readily be perceived. Others fruit after some time and it is more difficult to see the connection. Yet others do not come to fruit in this life but in the next or in more distant future lives. These are most difficult to understand and indeed, unless by the practice of meditation, the power of remembering former existences is developed, the ordinary person has no way of understanding events which to him are either inexplicable, thought of as random or chance occurrences, or put down when all else fails, to the Will of God.

Action and result is not a dogma of Buddhist teaching, it is something practical and to be seen in one's own (and to a limited extent from others') life. Why does intentional action produce a result? In such action there is an expenditure of energy much greater than occurs with unintentional action. This energy may be called 'will-power' though this is not a Buddhist term. It is well-known in the physical sciences that energies expended are productive of some resultant effect. Now while we do not, in Buddhism, speak of cause and effect, still due to the expenditure of will-energy, a resultant event is to be expected to arise some time after the action, depending on the presence or absence of conditions which aid or retard its fruition. The formula which is used instead of cause-and-effect is: 'X' being present, 'Y' arises, 'X' not being present, 'Y' does not arise. The action is not the cause and the result the effect but dependently arising from one event, another event comes to be: thus there is a continuous flowing-on of inter-related events, and not a philosophically difficult dichotomy of causes on one side and effects on the other. (QUESTION POINT: THE VARIOUS PROCESSES COLLECTIVELY CALLED DEPENDENT ORIGINATION, OR CONDITIONED CO-PRODUCTION).\*



Royal Relic Dagoba at Lampang, Northern Siam.





A wat in Ayuthia, the old capital.

(above) Wat Buddhaisavan, Ayuthia.

(below) Three Spires Dagoba at Lopburi.



An ancient Buddhist monument in Jaiya, southern Siam.

This stream of inter-related events flows on through the three periods of time: past actions condition present character and environment to a greater or lesser extent. If a person's past strongly conditions his present life, then in the present moment, his ability to choose is limited; according to his freedom from past conditioning so his freedom of choice becomes greater.<sup>(1)</sup> The sage well-skilled in Morality, Meditation and Wisdom, is free of conditioning from the past and, though he may still experience results of past activity, his choice in the present is unlimited. But most people are swayed to a greater or lesser extent in their choice, a fact to be remembered, as present willed actions condition future existence. Moral responsibility is thus firmly established in Buddhist Teaching where one who practises, knows:

“I am the owner of action, the heir of action, the birth-place of action, the relation of action and the pathway of action. Whatever action I have done, good or evil, that shall I be heir to (receive).”

Readers will have noticed that this explanation does not mention 'sin', a concept alien to Buddhist thought. A Buddhist who breaks his precepts (See II Morality), knows that he will most probably suffer results according to his actions and he therefore renews his precepts (by taking them again from a monk, or if the latter has broken his, by confession, resolution and subsequent purity), resolving to

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(1) It is sometimes said that Buddhism is 'fatalism'. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is true that we must experience past conditioning which certainly limits and influences our choice in the present. But it is in the present when we make our decisions, skillful or otherwise, and when, if we take matters in hand instead of allowing them to overpower us, we can for instance decide to train ourselves in this or that way. The religious life in Buddhism is *not* one of sitting down and resignedly letting whatever must be, happen. There is no room here for concepts of fate, doom or destiny. The Buddha urged his followers many times to make an effort, to strive diligently, and this can be done only in the present moment.

In this way Buddhism steers clear of the two rocks of *deterministic fatalism and of free-will* concepts, obviously acceptable only in a limited sense to modern psychology.

strive to keep them pure in future: he is not weighed down by a great burden of guilt, the latter being thought of as a very unskillful mental attitude productive of future sufferings. Judgement, in Buddhist thought, is thus not in some distant future state but ever present as one experiences the results of past action.

Lastly, while Lord Buddha did not claim to redeem the sins of the world, it is recognized that many misdeeds which would normally produce unpleasant results, may be mitigated if not avoided by the whole-hearted cultivation of the Buddha's Way. In this Buddhism recognizes the mighty power of strong faith to move mountains and it is certain that many great obstacles may be overcome providing that faith-through-knowledge in the Buddha, His Teachings and the Holy Order, is well established.

## **REBIRTH**

Twice already reference has been made to the existence of lives previous to the present one which an individual may call to mind if he cultures his mental powers correctly. Lord Buddha and many of the great sages in His tradition have remembered past existences and seen, moreover, how actions initiated in one life have come to fruit in another.

This teaching of a continuity of lives is not peculiar to Buddhism but is accepted also in Hinduism, Jainism and the religion of the Sikhs. It has for long been a strong undercurrent though not officially accepted in Islam (Sufism), Christianity (Origen and the Gnostics) and is well-known in Neo-Confucian and Taoist teachings. In Christianity, it has never been openly accepted by the Church Councils, yet it may have been taught by Jesus and was not, in any case, named as anathema for Christians until the Council of Constantinople, C.E. 553. (Mark 8.27-30: And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way He asked

His disciples, saying unto them:- “ Whom do men say that I am? ” And they answered :- “ John the Baptist: but some say Elijah; and others, one of the prophets. ” Why should people say that he was Elijah then dead several hundred years or one of the other old prophets or even John the Baptist who was but recently dead, if they did not believe in re-incarnation?) A great many Christians have nevertheless found this teaching both helpful and reasonable and more acceptable than the theory of one life on earth followed by an eternity of bliss or pain.

A succession of lives with a soul incarnating into a series of bodies is often called re-incarnation. In Buddhism, the teaching regarding this matter is fundamentally different and we refer to it here as rebirth. (1)

Everyone will agree that his body changes from hour to hour, minute to minute, constantly wearing out and being replaced. If one pauses for thought, the same will be found true of the mind, that is, the stream of mental words and images forever flowing on. It is therefore easy for us to understand intellectually the impermanence of both mind and body. What then of the ‘soul’? By the ordinary processes of thought it is not to be found though the sense of ‘I-ness’ is strong. In meditation the ego-sense is still present though more subtle. With the exercise of Super-mundane Wisdom as possessed by the Buddha, the sense of ‘I-ness’ is discovered finally to be false and it is seen that there is no ground for assuming the existence of an unchanging entity or soul. Such an assumption is condemned in Lord Buddha’s Teachings as merely an empty speculation based upon craving but having no basis when explored by wisdom.

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(1) There is no re-incarnation in Buddhism because there is no unchanging spiritual entity; no soul can ultimately be found which can re-incarnate. Buddhism does not make a dichotomy of the perishable body on the one hand and an at eternal soul on the other. The Buddha’s insight discovered that both mind and body are inter-related and continually changing streams of events in which no unchanging soul or self as an ultimate principle, can be found. How rebirth is possible without such an entity is outlined in the paragraphs following.

In a relative sense, the "I" exists: there is a continuity which progresses from day to day and which I and others identify by such and such a name. Still, upon reflection, the "I" which existed when I was three years old, (my photograph at that age shows a small and sulky podge of a face), and that which is now thirty bear little resemblance to each other and while they are obviously not completely different people, it is equally obvious that they are not the same. Here, we have another illustration of the law: 'X' factor being present, 'Y' factor arises – Dependent on the existence of that small boy of three, the present man of thirty has come to be. This process of dependent arising not only goes on from one moment to the next but also applies from death of 'one individual' to the rebirth of the succeeding one. Thus dependent upon a certain being in a previous life, this being, has come into existence.

(QUESTION POINT: THE ACTUAL MENTAL PROCESSES INVOLVED FROM THE MOMENT OF DEATH TO THE MOMENT OF BIRTH).

How does this process of rebirth actually work? If a person who is near to death is questioned, it will often be found that he does not desire death. No, he wants only to live, .....there are the spring cabbages to plant, his neighbour to talk to, his nephew from a distant town to see, another book to be read..... and so on, and so on. There are so many things to be done that very few are really prepared to die gracefully and, relinquishing all worldly matters over which they can no longer have any say, come to death and their future existence in an accomplished manner. A person who, though at death's door, has a head full of worldly concerns, craves for sensual pleasures and further existence (becoming) in the sensual realms. One who dies with the blessings of heavenly existence in mind really looks forward to these extra-terrestrial delights and therefore has craving for becoming in a heavenly state. In either case there is the desire for future life.

This desire for further life, raised to the point of desperation as the various senses fail and the body ceases to function properly, is accompanied by the unexpended force of many actions, the fruits of which have yet to be experienced.

A man at the point of death may perceive different signs: he may mentally see the limitless and undimmed brilliance of the Light of Ultimate Reality shine down upon him – a glory more effulgent than a hundred-million suns. Many people who have nearly died (from drowning or from an operation in hospital), have described such an experience. Usually they are ill-equipped to take advantage of this fleeting revelation, indeed, so intent are they on getting a new lease of life in some realm or other that fear arises and they neglect this great opportunity to gain Nirvāna; the transcendental experience vanishing while they, so to speak, hurriedly scuttle away to bury themselves again in some mundane existence.

Following upon this Great Light of the Void, come other marks which are either symbols out of the past or those presaging the future. A person may see a symbol representing some event of his past life, (as a wedding-ring symbolizing marriage, or a tea-cup representing enjoyment of that beverage, for even trivial matters may arise and influence rebirth), or a picture-memory of some occurrence during that life may also be seen. These symbols have a great influence on the next life and a man dying with an unskillful memory-symbol as the object of his consciousness (as a man who remembers some fraud he has committed, the bad words he used to revile another, or a murder) is bound for a rebirth in accordance with that consciousness. As the latter is connected with the unskillful, so the birth will be unpleasant, (see below). On the other hand, dying inspired by thoughts of religious faith or recollecting the skillful deeds one has performed, leads to rebirth in a realm where the skillful predominates – i.e. in the happiness of what is called 'heaven'. A man with some mundane and ethically neutral object of mind such as a glass

of iced coffee will most probably come to birth amongst men where that particular drink may be obtained! So one goes according to one's deserts and, as existence in pleasant states and those unpleasant is alike impermanent, so birth follows birth sometimes enjoyable, sometimes painful, sometimes middling. Dependent on the life of a previous 'individual', this present being has come to existence; depending upon the actions of this present being, so a future 'person' will come to be. 'I', in the present, am neither the same as that past being, nor different from it, but depending on it, 'I' have come to exist now. So the continuous stream of existence rolls on.....

The question is often raised: 'Why is it that if I have a past life or lives, I do not remember them?' This is well-answered by illustrations of the power of memory. Firstly, do you remember from minute to minute *exactly* everything which happened yesterday? Memory being so defective that even a negative answer to this question must be given, why should one remember events which may have happened many years ago? Again memory, as it supports the ego-sense, only registers certain events, forgets others and distorts even the information which is retained. Ask an old man what the weather was like when he was young and he will be sure to declare that it was better than it is now, and that crops were better, summers longer, rain more plentiful, and so forth. Meteorological records will prove him wrong – the weather was then much the same as it is now but his memory has conveniently forgotten the unwelcome rain or the bitter cold, he looks back in fact, upon an imaginary 'golden age'. It is a feature of the human memory to remember the happy and forget the unhappy thus building up a distorted picture of the world. One particularly painful experience which is soon forgotten and then overlaid by subsequent sense-experience, is the memory of being born. This is an excruciating experience for the child as Buddhist psychology has always taught and modern obstetrics have recently confirmed.

Preceding this, comes existence in the womb which, far from being a safe and comfortable retreat as some psychologists aver, is a dreadful time for the embryo, which is not merely a small physical organism, but is a being often possessed at that time of memories as yet undimmed, of a former existence, perhaps one much more pleasant than the prison-like surroundings in which it now finds itself. Further back lies the moment of conception for which the Buddha has taught that not only the physical particles from male and female are needed, but also the being seeking rebirth.\*

Such a being, wandering in an intermediate state,\* a sort of timeless existence during which it is possessed of a fine mind-created body and perceives the various signs which will determine its future bourn, may then see a male and female in the act of copulation and being attracted to them, (a future son wishes to make love to his future mother, a future daughter to her future father), finds that he has lost his spirit-powers and is now entangled and must then suffer womb-existence and eventual birth.

As we are speaking of events which prevent most people remembering previous lives, it only remains to add the agony of dying to the other pains set forth above and it will be readily understood that few indeed will wish to remember so many events of a traumatic intensity and most indeed will hurry to forget.

A few, however, do remember. Many children, many more than is usually supposed, do have recollections of their past lives. Some are also born with bodily markings which are the result of some action in the past existence. A few adults retain these memories quite clearly but they often become dimmed by the developing faculties of mind while growing up. Some cases of such memories have been collected in Siam and with cases from Western countries, will soon be published from an American Research Institute. In

many of these cases it is possible to check the details remembered with the aid of living people or past records, and a high degree of accuracy is a remarkable feature of these memories. Deep hypnosis also sometimes produces details of a previous existence though not always the last one. Finally, and most dependable of all, are the memories awakened through a mind clear and concentrated in meditation when, as we have seen, not merely one life may be recalled, but even countless ages of lives may be re-experienced in complete clarity of detail.

Summing up this section on rebirth may be done in the words of a famous Buddhist simile from the questions asked by King Milinda (Menander in Greek) of the sage Nāgasena: Rebirth is by the latter compared to the changes which a single jug of milk may undergo. To begin with there is just milk, this changes to curds, these to butter, from butter comes ghee and from ghee, the skim of ghee, and such processes may develop one from another, infinitely. Each stage is compared to one birth and all the time from the stage of being milk until it becomes ghee-skin, there is no underlying entity which actually goes unchanged – there are here only processes at work, processes going onwards and working themselves out. The position of man, if he had but a little humility to see it, is the same: processes constantly change, react, change.....

## **REALMS OF EXISTENCE**

Having dealt briefly with Rebirth and how one is reborn, two further questions require answers. Where does rebirth take place? And, why is one reborn in such realms?

Usually in Buddhism either five or six different realms of existence are described as possible bourns though these by no means constitute a dogmatic or rigid system, as experiences within each of them vary enormously, varying according to the past actions of the beings living in them. Of these, only two,

those of human-kind and animals, are normally perceptible by man. Before we shrug our shoulders at the existence of invisible beings in states unknown to us, an increasingly common attitude these days<sup>(1)</sup>; we must consider one thing: the relativity of perception.

Normally, men assume that the world 'out there' exists just as they perceive it (by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue and physical contact) but if we consider these sense-organs, it must be apparent to us that the world 'out there' is really largely the product of our particular modes of perception. In other words, the human eye limits and conditions by its very structure the objects we are able to see. It is well-known that a bee, for instance, can see as colour, ultra-violet but we have no idea what such a colour looks like nor, of course, can we find any words to describe it. It follows therefore, that our sense-organs being differently constructed, our world 'out there' would also be quite different.

In addition, in the Teaching of the Buddha, the mind is regarded as a sixth sense, having as its objects, ideas and memories. 'Mind', really a congeries of mental processes,

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(1) This is like a man with the smallest power transistor radio, only able to pick up stations in Siam who upon being told of Australian, British or American stations, just laughs and declares that *his* little radio receives all possible stations. A person with a really powerful set knows that he is wrong. Man, so proud of his mental capacity, seldom likes to admit that it could possibly be limited: the skilled meditator with so much more experience of the real range of existence, *knows* how small is the range of the unpracticed mind but instead of regarding such persons as stupid, he has compassion for their narrow outlook and a desire that they too should at least know of the many different possibilities for existence.

One's attitude to these realms, at the moment not directly perceived, should rather be the open mind. One does not close the door of belief, thereby cutting off possibility of experience of these states, nor does Buddhist Teaching demand that one shall accept them without question: until and if, they become a part of one's experience, one just maintains an open mind regarding them.

working in our case usually upon the human level, thus conditions all our perceptions from a human point of view. However, in the case of a few people, their minds are not so limited and they are able to penetrate into other realms. The most reliable way of doing so is by means of a mind skilled in meditative concentrations accompanied by full awareness, or as Buddhists usually say, mindfulness; such a person is able, at will, to experience some or all of the levels of existence which are about to be described. A few of the lower existence-levels are also open to mediums of the spiritualist tradition but as their experiences are accompanied by slothful mental states, it is unwise to place much confidence in their pronouncements.(1)

Besides the intermediate state which may intervene between all states of birth, there are the following six realms, beginning with the superior and progressing 'downwards', into which one may be 'born'.

*The gods.* The Buddha and many other teachers have had contact with beings more mighty, long-lived and happy than humanity. They enjoy various states of existence which accord with the different levels of mental development which are open to cultivation by human beings.

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(1) A medium ( provided there is no fraud ) may gain contact with a number of ghostly personalities who often, as we shall see, exist upon a very low level. Mediums may occasionally contact some of the lower gods from the lowest heavens — those of sense-desire. From the first they will only get incoherent babble ( which is often 'interpreted' for the comfort of supposed relatives ), but from the gods more meaningful messages may be derived. However, Buddhism discourages mediumistic practices as being harmful to the medium ( danger of mental derangement ) and harmful to the ghostly personalities who if they are seeking rebirth, ( in the intermediate state ), should be free to go forward to a new existence and not be dragged back to old ties, which they cannot contact or live with any longer. To awake old cravings in them is but to torment them.

Thus a man decides to spend his life developing meditation. Doing this, he reaches up to the level of the Formless attainments.\* Becoming proficient in these (a very rare thing indeed), he is able to die with his mind dwelling on one of the four Formless levels. Dying thus, the mind continues to exist on that level. Conventionally we may say 'he has been reborn in such-and-such a Formless Realm', but it is nearer to the truth when put thus; 'That continuity which on earth we knew as Mister so-and-so, has now arisen (not 'born' as there is no physical birth amongst the gods) in such-and-such a Realm'. The gods of the Formless Realms abide in their respective states of Infinite Space, Infinite Consciousness, No-thingness, and Neither-perception-nor-Non-perception, for periods of time almost impossible for us to conceive. It is hardly true to say that they 'enjoy' their enormous life-spans, for they are beyond enjoyment in the ordinary sense of the word. Yet, when the merit from the earthly practice of the Formless Attainments, has been exhausted, they can no longer abide in that sort of existence and 'fall' to rebirth in spiritually lower Realm—usually amongst the gods of the Form Realm, next to be described.

Buddhist practice does not particularly encourage the attainment of these Formless Realms, for as meditations they are apt to be something of a spiritual 'No through road', except in the hands of a meditative genius who may use them with good effect. As states of existence they are rather cosmically isolated and to get 'stuck' therein (not the fate of many people), is to cut off all hope for a very long time of developing Wisdom, and so Freedom, and thus Nirvāna. One may, for instance, miss the chance of hearing an Enlightened One preach, through arising in these realms of long existence.

More spiritually fruitful are practices which lead one to experience the worlds of Form. By attaining the four Concentrated Absorptions\* described in Buddhist texts, one is able to experience the different Form-worlds which correspond to them. The gods which arise in these worlds (in the same way as the Formless gods), have subtle bodies and enjoy spiritual pleasures. Whereas the basic emotional tone among humans is one of sensual pleasure ('eros' in Greek), among these gods it is one varying from Loving-kindness (the Greek 'agape') to spiritual equanimity. Their lifetimes are less enormous than the preceding but still colossal by earthly standards.

Among them there are some gods who are proud of their state and have the belief (due to their prior uprising in the realm which they inhabit), that they are "Victor, Unvanquished, All-seeing, Controller, Lord, Maker, Creator, Chief, Disposer, Master, Father of all that have become and will be". The Buddha had cause to counsel such gods on several occasions and to point out that far from being Eternal, they were essentially, like all other living beings, *impermanent*, having had a previous life and very like to know a subsequent existence too.

According to the Buddha's Transcendent Wisdom, beings who think of themselves as Creators, are themselves deluded. They have in past lives, practised much meditation and thereby become great even among the gods but they do not remember their past existences, nor have they gained much Wisdom (or they would not be where they are). Other gods descending from the supposed 'Creator's' company come to birth as men and, practising meditation, gain a memory of their previous life but not of others preceding it. With deep conviction they thus come to believe that this or that God whom

they remember clearly, is the Maker of Heaven and Earth etc.<sup>(1)</sup>. It is thus that five hundred or one thousand years respectively before the major theistic world faiths came into existence, Lord Buddha from His Wisdom gently pointed out the origin of such religions.

There are also many gods who questioned Lord Buddha and were taught by Him during His meditative retreats among them. Many became His disciples and still live perfecting themselves and instructing others in these Realms of Form. With these meditative absorptions as a basis, or

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(1) It may be seen from the above that the statement 'all religions are really the same', can scarcely be upheld. However, there is a foundation to all religions which is the same, though this is quite a different proposition from the former. By sameness of foundation is meant the generally-held teaching: do good works sincerely and in abundance while a human being and go to heaven as a result'. This is the common doctrine of all the major religions, Buddhism no less than the rest, though this Teaching does point out the psychological reasons *why* one goes to heaven (or to any other state) and this, of course, has nothing to do with the faith in any god.

As 'all-is oneism' appears to be a widespread modern misconception, it may be well to consider some reasons which appear to support it. It may be based on :

a) ignorance ( a lack of thorough study of the different religious systems ).

b) faith ( if this is an article of faith, the one holding it must lack in wisdom ).

c) acceptance of someone else's statements about this ( one should not blindly accept ).

d) an attempt to impose order upon what seems to be a chaos of different teachings, ( the truth is not to be got at by imposition ).

e) a desire for harmony between religions ( excellent, but such harmony will not be arrived at by steam-roller tactics ).

f) a craving for security which may be assuaged if one assures oneself, or goes on assuring others, that it is all the same anyway ( real security does not come from self-deception ).

Buddhists are guided by their philosophy to be able to see clearly what is 'sameness' and what is 'difference.' They certainly appreciate the work of different religious groups which point out the 'unity of religions' — only they, unguided by Wisdom, may arrive at false conclusions. Real harmony between faiths depends not only on scholarship but on Wisdom and a facing of real facts after which one will arrive at conclusions both true and harmonious.

abiding as a god in them, one may develop Wisdom provided that the right counsels are available: thus they may be fruitful. After spending a long existence there if release from the round of rebirth is not won, the next birth will usually be either among the lowest group of gods (see below), or again as a man.

A man who leads a blameless moral life and does good works and perhaps has a little meditative concentration (without attaining any of the absorptions), has raised his mind in quality above the run of ordinary humans but yet not broken through the barrier of sensual desire. At death, his mind dwelling with calm joy upon a life beneficent to other beings, he comes to uprise in the Heavens of the Realm of Desire. There are several different levels here where subtle sense-pleasures may be enjoyed. Amongst the gods of these planes there are both male and female between whom there is a sort of heavenly love (the higher gods have risen above the duality of sexual differentiation).

In general, the common Christian and Muslim ideas of Heaven or Paradise correspond to these states, described in Buddhism with considerable precision, this exactness stemming from the actual experience of Lord Buddha and many subsequent teachers. Life in them, no doubt very delightful, is even shorter than existence among the higher gods. There are fewer beings in these states who are able to comprehend the Truths taught by Lord Buddha since they are too much taken with having a delightfully pleasant time to be able to listen to, or practise, the Teachings on Morality, Meditation and Wisdom. In Buddhist tradition however, one of the heavens is the abode of the future Buddha who will be called Metteyya (Maitreya), the loving One. He is now a Wisdom Being in His last life but one and awaits suitable conditions to take birth at last upon this earth, gain Perfect Enlightenment, and then show the Ancient Way, a Way shown by

countless past Buddhas, and by Gotama Buddha in the present, to yet more people in that future time.

To conclude our very limited account of the gods, the ancient simile of the Pāli scriptures may well illustrate their position, 'Birth' among them is compared to a weary man travelling on a hot day but coming at last to a luxurious palace in which upon an ornate divan covered with costly materials, he takes his rest and experiences feelings which are *exclusively pleasant*. (1)

The last-mentioned beings were the gods of the Sensual Realm, and in this realm all the remaining types of birth occur, where, as we have seen, due to the presence of sense-desire there must always be a certain degree of conflict. Even among these gods this is the case (though not among the higher deities of the other two Realms) and as they have desires, albeit for more subtle pleasures than humanity usually craves, so they have to battle against war-like beings who are said to have originally been gods but were driven out of the heavens because of their quarrelsome nature (compare the fall of Satan and his hosts). These beings, who may be called titans,\* are possessed of great power but are quarrelsome and jealous and as a result not only fight the lower gods but wound and injure themselves. Theirs is a world of power, and bitterness, a strange and terrible combination.

How is this type of birth related to man's existence? Suppose a man loves power and he spends his time securing his hold over others. He loves best to give orders even if they result in hurting others. He schemes, plans, plots and does

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(1) It is sometimes said that Buddhism is 'atheistic' or a 'godless religions'. What has been said above should disperse this notion or rather correct it. The gods may be worshipped for limited and worldly blessings but being impermanent and worldly themselves, they cannot grant prayers concerned with Liberation (Nirvāna) which is Transcendental and which they have not gained. The lesser gods are somewhat equivalent to angels except that according to Christian mythology, one cannot become an angel. Buddhism is only atheistic in the sense that it rejects as false the theory of a First Cause, a Creator God.

not hesitate in removing rivals by violent means. His mind, set on gaining power during his life, is not able to relinquish the power-lust when he comes to death. Dying with the thought of retaining that power over others which seems to be slipping from him, he comes to birth among the titans, where he certainly has power - but so have all the others in that existence. It is the bourn to which all those who have power but misuse it are heading. Not at all a pleasant uprising.

Next in the scale comes man. In the Pāli simile, man's state is described as follows: a man travelling along a certain way comes to large and shady tree with comfortable flat earth beneath it; there he takes his rest and experiences feelings which are *abundantly pleasant*. The gods and man are said to be 'happy' bourns whereas the titans and the three other types of birth described below are decidedly 'unhappy'.

Man occupies a very important place in the Buddhist cosmos, not indeed because he is 'created in the image of God' according to Christianity but because he has the power of decision. Human life is a mixture of the happy with a good dash of the bitter. Men who experience this mixture will not always be lulled to a sense of false security by too much pleasure and having the great advantage of being fairly intelligent are thus capable of doing something about their woes.

As opposed to this, the gods live lives graded up from the super-pleasurable through radiant bliss up to a rarified equanimity and their habitats being so enjoyable, they do not often take an interest in actively developing factors leading to the Transcendental, (except when aroused by a Buddha or other great sages). They are also living rather on spiritual credit and are therefore limited in their ability to make unusual decisions (such as to pursue actively a religious quest). The titans are too much pre-occupied with brawling and wounding to put into practice a Way of Salvation. In the other three births, the hungry ghosts are concerned only

with unsatisfied cravings, the animals have minds centred upon food and sex, while the unfortunate hell-sprites are too much tormented in innumerable ways even to think about the Way.

Man can, and occasionally does, think about the Way. Less often he actually puts Morality, Meditation and Wisdom into practice and when he does so, he becomes that Way for its factors become an integral part of his life. It was to man that Lord Buddha preached most of His important Teachings knowing that men could *understand* them, *practise* them and so come to *realize* them, ( as the three sections of this book try to show ).

A man may decide to devote himself to selfish, unskillful ends, a mere existence, or to give purpose to his life by the practice of skillful deeds which will make others and himself happy. It is true that there is a backlog of habit-tendencies from the past to influence him. Still, in most cases, man can make the vital decision to shape his life in this way or that. In doing so, he also gives shape to his future existence, for as has been explained, skillful deeds increase the power of good in the mind thus ensuring a happy rebirth; unskillful deeds will only be productive, through the strengthening of a warped and diseased mind, of miserable future existence.

It is man who can experience, if he wishes, Supreme Enlightenment and become as the Buddha – this is the greatest blessing, for it obtains not only the secure tranquillity of one person's salvation but out of Compassion shows the Way to many more. Readers will readily understand that to be born as a man, is especially precious, a great opportunity not to be wasted. It is said in a Pāli scripture that Lord Buddha once illustrated the rarity of human life thus: Supposing a man threw into the ocean a piece of wood with a hole in it and it was then blown about by the various winds and currents over the waters. In the ocean lived a blind turtle which had to surface from time to time in order to breathe. Even in one

Great Aeon it would be most unlikely in surfacing, to put its head into the hole in that piece of wood. Such is the rarity of human life among countless lives spent in the unhappy conditions.

These unhappy states are warnings to us that if we cultivate Greed, Hatred and Delusion in our minds, these types of birth will be the possible objects of our craving when we die.

Below man in the spiritual scale come the hungry ghosts.\* These beings are sometimes seen, heard or otherwise experienced by some people. Whether one 'believes in ghosts' or not, makes no difference for here we are not concerned with mere beliefs but with actual experience: experience of the Buddha and also of many meditation masters following Him. Suffice to say that some people's minds are open to perceive these unhappy creatures. How do they come to that state? Think of people whose attachments to money, material possessions, to family, are very strong. The misers of this world, those who are the family octopus, those who rejoice in having more, better and bigger things than their next-door neighbours—such people are developing factors of mind which if they persist in them, will lead them to uprise among these hungry ghosts.

'Hungry' means experiencing constantly unsatisfied cravings—for contact with their former family whom they can perhaps alarm but not communicate with, for their money and goods which they may actually see but cannot get hold of: they are in fact, in the position of Tantalus of Greek mythology, bound for a long time to crave what cannot be got at. Life among them is long and miserable and they perceive neither night nor day, only an interminable greyness out of which blurred objects occasionally appear. When, owing the exhaustion of the evil action-force which drove them into ghostly existence, they are reborn, it sometimes happens that if their birth is among men, they will be deformed in some way.

The Pāli simile speaks of their state as of a man who although weary can only find a broken-down tree giving patchy shade with rough, stony ground underneath it on which to take his 'rest'. He experiences, as a hungry ghost, feelings which are *abundantly painful* and only very slightly coloured with happiness.

'Downwards' again, comes the animal kingdom, where Delusion or dullness, the inability to understand, reigns supreme.

Men who descend to a lower level than human by filling their minds to the exclusion of much else, with thoughts of food and drink, and sex, invite rebirth for themselves among animals.

Not only do animals not have the ability to understand but also their lives are for the most part very miserable ones. Wild animals either live in fear of being killed by other animals or by carnivorous man, or if carnivorous themselves they are driven on by an urge to kill others, while all fear starvation about which they can do almost nothing. Domesticated animals suffer, many of them, in being used for man's own purposes. They must bear the brunt of heat and cold, of parasites and diseases without being able to do anything effective to cure these ills. Fortunately for animals, their lives are usually short and their sufferings soon over. Although this is a blessing for them, it is difficult for a being experiencing animal life to get a chance to do something meritorious or even to understand the advantages of doing so, thus preventing the attainment of human birth until some result of good action from the distant past arises and gives freedom from continued becoming in the animal state. Born from the animal to human condition, beings are often stupid, a hang-over from their previous life.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Theosophical teachings usually state that man can only progress from life to life, ever spiritually evolving to higher states. This is not accepted in Buddhism which takes note of the fact that men do not only progress, they also regress. No progress is to be seen in men who (to take extreme cases as more easily understandable) were S.S. Guards at Auschwitz or Belsen, or in those who planned and actually committed the dropping of the Atom Bombs in Japan, or those whose work is continually to butcher animals to satisfy human craving or in hardened criminals, or the permanent inmates of mental hospitals and so on. All such are sliding down the scale, down from human level to these sub-human states.

In Pāli, the simile speaks of a man going along a way and coming eventually to a cess-pit full of stinking filth—into this he falls and experiences, as an animal, feelings which are *painful, sharp, severe*.

As animals are within the field of human perception and it is known that they too have the chance one day, to gain Enlightenment (they are not just made to be used anyhow by man), this being so, Buddhists generally treat them well, having consideration for their feelings.

The lowest and most miserable condition of existence is not however within normal human experience: hell\* is not usually directly perceived by man.<sup>(1)</sup> It seems that some people with acute mental derangement really live, in this life, in hell, for their world is certainly not as ours. Also, the occasional meditator who either takes a wrong turning (very dangerous for his sanity), or who is able to control his mind very well indeed, may also experience the hell-states. One Indian meditator has described falling down what seemed to be an infinitely deep, dark and menacing pit at the bottom of which was a mass of unutterable filth in which, very slowly and unavailingly half-recognizable beings were struggling in great pain. This would seem to be but one aspect of the hell-states, as intense heat and cold as well as demonic apparitions are perceived in this state (all such phenomena being produced by the force of past unskillful deeds in the minds of those who experience them).

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(1) As with all other states, hell-conditions are temporary and though often of very long duration, always come to an end when the action-forces producing this kind of birth, are exhausted. The idea of eternal damnation is quite abhorrent to Buddhists who would ask what sort of God could possibly conceive of such a place? Is not God spoken of as loving and merciful? What a contradiction is here!

In the realm of logic, a Buddhist avers that a finite cause (an evil action on earth) cannot be productive of an infinite effect (everlasting damnation), finite causes only giving rise to finite effects: hence hell is just as subject to impermanence as heaven. A religion which stresses the importance of Compassion as does Buddhism cannot possibly conceive of everlasting hell, for *all* beings eventually may enter in to the Great Peace of Nirvāna.

According to Buddhist psychology, the mental factor of hatred is always linked to the experience of pain. One may be greedy and happy but never angry and happy at the same time. Anyone who cultivates hatred, anger, malice, nurses revenge or keeps alive a grudge is bound to experience much suffering for he has laid hold of a very potent source of it. Those who exercise their hatred on others as in killing, torturing or maiming may expect birth in a state, compared in the scriptural simile to a pit full of glowing embers, where they will experience feelings which are *exclusively painful, sharp, severe*. Only in such an environment will they be able to experience all the misery which they, by their own unskill, have brought upon themselves.

Life in the various hells is accordingly long, pointing out to us the gravity of the evil committed when, with a mind hate-filled, we bring sorrows upon others. To do so, is to invite continual torment and out of this state finally, miserable and terrified beings eventually escape and, laying hold of the result of some slightly skillful action, may ascend to animal birth, for it is rare for a being to be able to jump from the hells to human condition. If this can be done, the human being resulting will often be both deformed and idiot, a terrible reminder of his former existence. Visitors to Buddhist countries may sometimes notice such a person being helped by a relative to give alms or do some other act of merit in order that the deranged one may become whole in his next existence.

It will be noted of the different levels of existence described here, that in every case they come to be experienced by sentient beings because of the cultivation of factors either skillful or unskillful. From one point of view it is true to say that certain mental factors being present and producing in combination the arising of a certain type of mind, this will be productive of a corresponding environment. Looking at the situation in a somewhat different way, it is also correct to say that a certain mode of life relies upon or has its basis in a definite pattern of mental working. The Buddhist teachings on the existence of certain bourns for rebirth are therefore no

empty fancy but stress the fact, everywhere taught in Lord Buddha's Teachings, of the paramount importance of the state of the mind. *According to the mind, so is the world which is perceived*, another illustration of Conditioned Arising.

The mind, overcoming its mundane limitations is able to attain the transcendental which lies 'beyond' all the various levels of existence (see III). An end of continued birth is only found when one arrives unshakably at the same insights which Lord Buddha and many others have known. Stopping the wheel of birth-and-death coincides with the knowledge of Perfection and this is what Lord Buddha knew, the Great Peace of Nirvāna. The Pāli simile is exceptionally beautiful when describing Nirvāna and is quoted here in full: "Then I, Sāriputta, with my mind comprehend the mind of some person thus: As that person fares along and as he is going along and has entered on that way, so will he, by the destruction of the Poisons, enter and abide in the freedom of mind, the freedom through intuitive wisdom that are without poisons, having realized them here-now by his own super-knowledge. After a time I see that he, by doing so, is abiding in them, experiencing feelings that are exclusively tranquil. Sāriputta, it is as if there were a lovely lotus-pool with clear, sweet and cool water, limpid, the banks of which are beautiful, while close to it lies a well-shaded forest thicket. Then a man might come along overcome and over-powered by the hot-weather heat, exhausted, parched and thirsty, heading directly by the only way for that very pool. A man with vision having seen him, might say: 'As that good man is faring along and has entered on that way, so will he come to that lotus-pool itself. After a time he might see that he has plunged into that lotus-pool, has bathed in it and drunk of it, and having allayed all distress, exhaustion and fever, has got out again and is sitting or lying down in that forest thicket experiencing feelings that are *exclusively tranquil*'. (*Middle Length Sayings I: 76 - 7*).

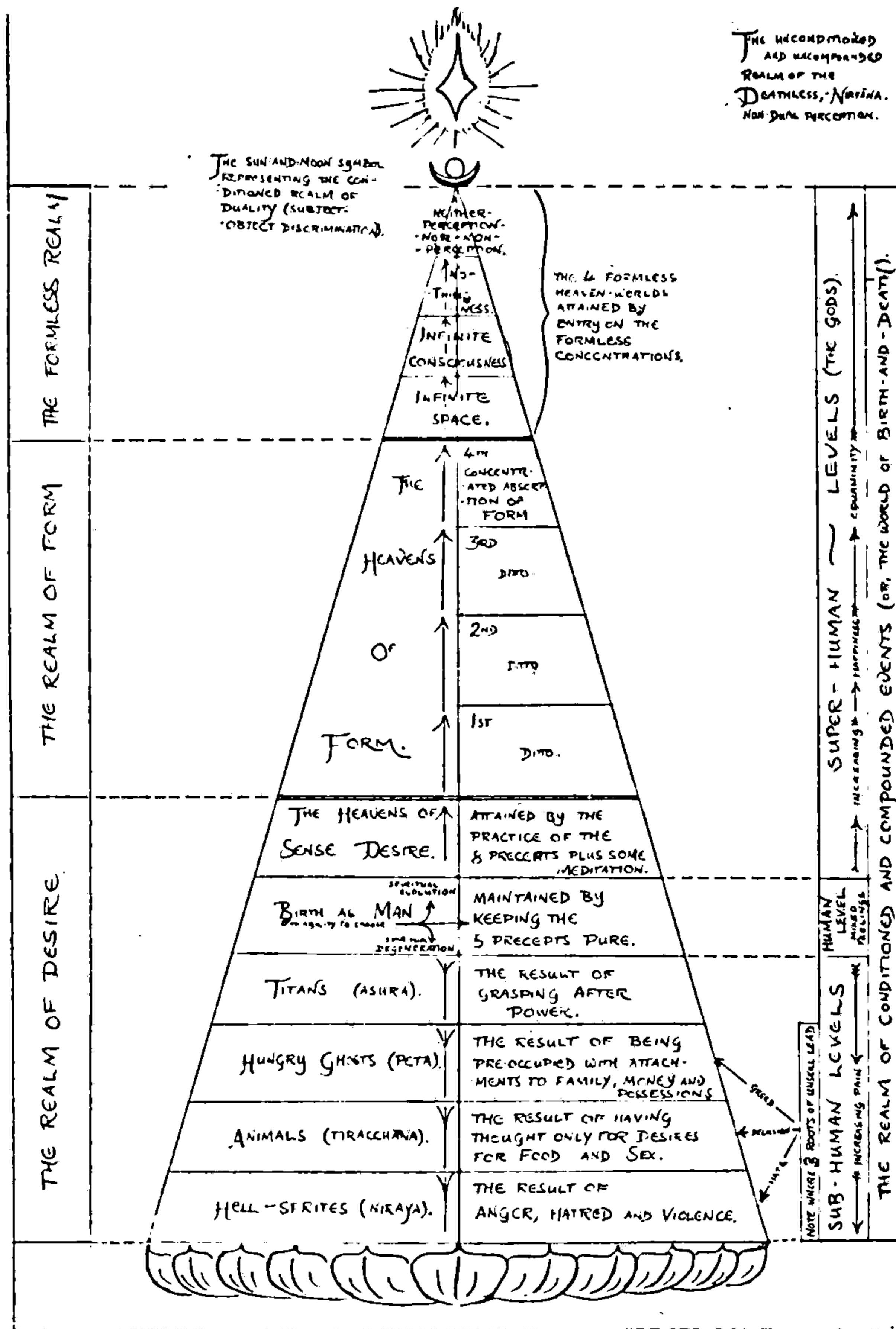
As Buddhism is a religion of Compassion as well as Wisdom, Buddhists give thought to and try to relieve the sufferings of those born in unfortunate states. Principally, this is done by performing some skillful action and then devoting the merit accrued, to the welfare of other beings.

The teachings on the transference of merit are another example of the skillful use of a doctrine for methodological purposes. So that people do not try to hoard merit as 'their own' and so that they develop a sympathy with and a wish to alleviate the sufferings of others, they are encouraged to devote merits to the unhappy beings. Very often, it is directed towards the hungry ghosts, and to past relations who may now be experiencing the woes of that realm; this has also the very practical benefit of appeasing such beings and ensuring that they do not trouble humanity.

Finally, it is necessary to answer one question which is, perhaps naively, quite often asked about rebirth: Now that the population of the world is increasing, where do all the 'new' people come from? This is largely answered above where it has been shown that man's life is not an isolated phenomenon but a continuous flowing-on which spiritually may evolve to other states or degenerate to the sub-human. The beings, both in the super and in sub-human states, vastly outnumber the small race of mankind on this earth. (Think alone of the number of ants in Siam compared with the human population!) But Buddhist thought is not limited to this insignificant planet and has always conceived of infinite numbers of vast world-systems (galaxies in modern parlance), inhabited in accordance with their conditions. The beings of one world-system are not isolated from those of another and although rebirth will usually take place in the same one, this is not necessarily the case. Usually however, a being human in the last birth and seeking rebirth among men, will come to be born again amongst people of a similar group. Sometimes birth will take place even into the same family especially where family ties are strong. Religion, governing as it does many social matters and thus colouring a great deal of the environment, will for this reason frequently remain the same from birth to birth though this is by no means always so.

Summing up this section, the following diagram is presented and will make clear at single glance what has been said here in many pages.

# The different Realms and how to get to them



The various realms of sentient existence where there is experience, either through the five senses or by way of the mind, are shown from top to bottom in order of increasing grossness. These realms, of course, should not be thought of as actually being one on top of another. They are 'upwards' or 'downwards' only in the spiritual sense of their relative superiority (increasing happiness), or inferiority — (increasing unsatisfactory experience). The dimension in which they variously exist is that of the *mind* as we have tried to show.

## IN THE BEGINNING

Having written in outline upon the why and wherefore of Rebirth, one matter at least remains unmentioned: How and where did it all begin?

Readers accustomed to an answer for this question involving the Creation by God, may be a little disturbed by the answer given by Lord Buddha. He rejected completely the notion of a Creator, as being quite unnecessary and, on being asked about the beginning of the world, adopted what for many people is a puzzling attitude. To understand Lord Buddha on his point, we must realize that He was *only* concerned with answering questions which would be of help in disentangling people from their woes and setting them upon the Path of Perfection.<sup>(1)</sup> He was not concerned with speculating, nor with giving to people knowledge which would encourage this tendency. He did not condemn worldly knowledge and indeed well-appreciated through His own training that a wide education could be very beneficial but for those who wished to fathom within themselves problems most difficult to answer, He recognized that such earnest enquirers must not be hindered by knowledge which would only distract them from their main purpose, the development of Transcendent Wisdom.

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(1) The Buddha has been represented by some as an 'agnostic' for refusing to answer certain questions. 'Agnostic' is a word from Greek meaning 'one who does not know'. With regard to Lord Buddha, He is sometimes known by the epithet of Sabbaññū, 'the All-Knower'. The writer prefers to believe that those actually following the Buddha's disciplines are correct in this matter and those who just study 'Buddhism' as an academic subject he believes to have gone seriously astray. 'All-knowing' means that to whatever subject Lord Buddha turned His attention, all the content of that was known to Him. It does *not* mean that He always knew everything about every subject—a claim He specially rejected about Himself.

Lord Buddha therefore turned aside this question, pointing out on one occasion that it is impossible to answer a wrong question. The human mind, so limited in its range of thought, can only conceive of things which have a beginning and an end but the Wisdom of the Buddha-mind being freed from limitations is not afraid to view the universe under the aspects of beginninglessness and endlessness.

An ancient verse is quoted as saying,

“No God, no Brahma, can be called

The Maker of this Wheel of Life :

Just empty phenomena roll on

Dependent on conditions all”.

*(Visuddhi-Magga XIX)*

This is the view from Enlightenment which is not a ‘thing’ in space-time but beyond both. To one enquirer the Buddha uttered the following solemn truth; “There is no beginning to be seen to beings driven on by craving and blinded by ignorance, who are hurrying through the different realms of existence”. He had through His own meditative powers found no beginning to the continuity of lives leading up to His last one. Everyone is in this position, with an infinitely long ‘tail’ of previous existences. There was never a beginning to this running-on in birth-and-death simply because ignorance has no beginning, it is fundamental to the very conception of ego, or individual existence. Where the latter is believed to be ultimately right and true (a typical thought of the distorting worldly mind, as we shall see), ignorance is automatically present, with its active counterpart, craving. Thus for Buddhists, ‘in the beginning’ is not meaningful and no point in time can be found when there was a Creation, nor any Creator. It is not more puzzling to understand an infinity of birth-and-death, rooted in

infinite ignorance, than it is to talk of a Creator who was never born. In the latter case however, one introduces into the evolution of the universe a factor, God, who far from simplifying the explanation of 'the beginning', only complicates matters. Indeed God, to Buddhists, is an unnecessary concept. One has then to ask where he came from, for that which is capable of causing the appearance of something must be caused by something—a Causeless Cause is an impossibility, unknown anywhere except in theology and there seems to be no reason why this branch of human knowledge should not be subject to the same laws as others.

Buddhist cosmology does not only take into account the existence of vast spaces scattered with innumerable world-systems but has equally vast conceptions of cosmic time. The most ancient Buddhist texts speak of the various phases in the evolution and devolution over enormous time-periods of galaxies; how they are gradually formed and how after a period of relative stability during which life may be found on them how, inevitably having come into existence, they must then in due course decline and go to destruction. All this is the working of processes, one event leading to another and does not require the intervention of a Maker. Watches have their watchmakers but the universe unrolls and rolls up by the forces which inhere in it.

Craving and ignorance are then at the root of continued rebirth and thus, those who wish (= crave) for Everlasting Life may easily get it. But they must be warned, it will not always be spent among the pleasures of heaven—few existences indeed will be among these states. More will be as man to suffer birth, disease, old age and death, enemies which no one can repel. We have already spoken of the troubles experienced by sub-human beings, and existence among them may also form part of this Everlasting Life.

### THREE ROOTS OF UNSKILL

Whenever a Teaching of the Buddha is examined it is always found to be a path which leads one to consider the mind from some angle or other. This is because the mind is fundamental to all experience: with crooked or unskillful states of mind present, one experiences birth-and-death; in their absence and with the development of skillful states, one may know the spiritual joys of heaven; finally, having liberated oneself with the sword of Wisdom from even a desire for the skillful, one comes to know the unutterable Transcendent Bliss of Nirvāna. Is one afflicted with the wandering-on in birth-and-death? Or does one exhibit in every action, supremely perfect Purity, Wisdom and Compassion as a Buddha? In one case the mind has not been cultured at all, while in the other it has attained such an incomparably vast change in function that although one may speak of a Buddha as possessed of such and such mental powers, His condition is really beyond all classifications.

In the Buddhist Teachings there exist a number of different classifications of mental states\* having various mental factors.\* The purpose of these teachings is to enable psychological analysis to be made so that unskillful states are quickly detected and broken up, skillful states vigorously promoted and both Meditation and Wisdom aided<sup>(1)</sup>. The actual working of this pragmatic psychology\* cannot be dealt with here but it is necessary to stress that it is an attempt to formulate in useful concepts dynamic mental states as opposed to static ideas such as 'mind', 'soul' etc.

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(1) There is some need to stress also that Buddhism has no 'philosophy' which is divorced from either its practice or its realization. Such philosophy which, while lacking a secure basis in Morality, Meditation and Wisdom and representing some philosophers, present views, is really no philosophy at all, only a species of speculation. Buddhist philosophers from Lord Buddha onwards to the present have always *lived* their philosophy to the full, in every situation of life and always expected their followers to strive to do likewise.

The experiences which most people regard as 'normal' knowledge are actually all twisted to a greater or lesser extent by the sense of 'I' and the sense of what is outside 'I'. Where this distinction is made, there is dualism and in its wake comes Greed (what 'I' like), Hatred (What 'I' dislike or do not want) and Delusion (the basic unknowing that anything is wrong with dualistic thinking). This twisting gives rise not to perception of the world as it really is, but to an 'I-processed' world, that is, one coloured by all the characteristic patterns of thought and memories which, when one links the past to the present and that in turn to expectations of the future, constitute one's own mental image of oneself. It is the latter which gets in the way of clear-seeing or Insight, for we are perpetually seeing the world through 'I-coloured' spectacles. It seems more or less to revolve about oneself, that is, all the perceived events by way of the various senses (including mind-sense) are in some way automatically related to the 'I'. Either they are thought of as part of the 'I', as belonging to it, as experienced by it, as wished for by it, as detested by it, as different to it—or, the negative relations as, 'not-I' etc. The 'I-mind' bringing about selfishness or egocentricity which is the experience of all those beings who have not known Transcendent Wisdom, is the source of all our sufferings for it brings in its wake, desire for, dislike of and dull indifference to—all emotional attitudes which will guarantee that true lasting happiness is not found.

Greed may be associated with temporary pleasure, but once the object of one's desire is got at, desire ceases and the pleasure which one derives from it is always more or less fleeting as the object is, in any case, impermanent.

Hatred in all its graded tones is the most effective way to destroy happiness and bring about misery. Whether it is self-hatred or dislike of others, both produce much suffering nor will dislike of object or circumstances help one to

happiness. A man who constantly develops anger (etc.) alienates himself from the rest of mankind (indeed from all other creatures), goes sour inside and is storing up for himself very unpleasant actions which will result in great unhappiness for him in the future.

Dullness or Delusion just prevents one seeing what really leads to happiness and what to unhappiness. Even if the whole of the Buddha's Way to Perfection, well explained and clear as a detailed map, were laid out in front of a person suffering particularly from this disease, they would not be able to understand it.

These three, Greed, Hate and Delusion, are called the Roots of Unskill\*, for it is from them, singly or in combination, that all the various unskillful states spring. They are also called Diseases, and according to Buddhist psychology anyone who permits these to spring up and flourish in his mind, is mentally diseased. Lunatics, far from all being safely restrained in hospitals, are in fact everywhere; we only keep in custody the most extreme examples in whom these Roots range unchecked, choking all skillful consciousness. All those who have not known Supreme Wisdom which is Non-dual, are to some degree mentally deranged, their consciousness split and warped. The only mentally 'whole' ones are those who have known non-dual perception, and are, therefore also 'holy' in the true sense of this much-misused word, (it is noteworthy that 'whole' and 'holy' are etymologically related).

### **THE PERVERSIONS**

From these Unskillful Roots arise the more complex Perversions\* that is to say when we regard people, objects and even notions, all of which are ever-changing from moment to moment, as permanent; what is really fraught with unsatisfactoriness as being pleasant; all phenomena, from electrons

to galaxies, both form and mentality, and including the living and the inanimate, all of which really do not possess any core, essence, soul or self, as in fact being in possession of some underlying entity; and lastly, the perversion which regards what is really unlovely, subject to decay and even 'messy', as being beautiful.

These Perversions exist in three degrees of intensity, and are respectively called the Perversion of Perception, that of Mind and that of Views. The first means that only one's perception is distorted and one mistakenly perceives things as what they are not (as seeing a rope but mistaking it for a snake, or hearing wind wail and mistaking it for ghosts, etc.). Perversion of Mind is the regarding of thoughts which are actually demeritorious and will lead to unhappiness as leading to happiness (as the dwelling in anticipation on some future object of pleasure, a person, place or thing which the perverted mind regards as giving real happiness). Lastly and most serious, is the Perversion of views as when some political, philosophical or religious view is seized on and regarded as being ultimate truth, without having subjected it to the searching test of Perfect Wisdom which alone reveals Ultimate Truth (as in religions of faith and good works where wisdom is relegated into the background, or in philosophies not securely based on Insight but merely on speculation, or in the special class of the latter, the materialistic and dogmatic pseudo-religions of the present, such as Communism or Fascism).

Each of the four above-mentioned Perversions may be experienced in these three intensities and to clarify the meaning of the former it is best again to use examples. In the first, we are deceived by the momentary exterior appearances of things. They do not appear to be changing, they appear to our Delusion-dulled senses as static. We do not perceive

processes in dynamic change but only as we think, entities which go on existing. Similarity, due to a line of change in a given direction, is often mistaken for sameness. If this misapprehension is firmly rooted in our mind, all sorts of attachments and cravings for things and people (including attachment to oneself) will be formed and these bring with them much sorrow, for to regard things and people in this way is to regard them as through a distorting glass. It is not seeing them correctly, it is seeing them pervertedly as though permanent.

Secondly, the unsatisfactory pervertedly appears to be pleasant. Thus people fritter away much of their precious lives on this or that 'pleasure' and as they never actually get the satisfaction they crave for, so they are driven on from one thing to another. 'Pleasures' may produce temporary feelings of ease, of worldly happiness, but they are always linked to succeeding disappointment, regret, longing for some other emotion indicating an absence of real satisfaction. Those who actually rejoice in Greed, Hate or Delusion are of course, pervertedly trying to enjoy what is not enjoyable. Unsatisfactoriness is linked to any mental state into which the above Three Roots enter. Nothing really satisfactory can be expected where they operate as they certainly do in turning round what is by nature unsatisfactory and making it appear the opposite.

The third mode of these Perversions in which objects are regarded as having a permanent essence, or people a self or soul, is the outcome of not perceiving the first and second above. In, or behind, ever-changing processes there cannot be anything unchanging or, firstly, how could the impermanent be related to something which would be its opposite? Secondly, such permanence is unknown both to the world investigated through Insight-meditations and also to all the array of modern sciences. Even in the realms of nuclear physics, no essences unchanging have been found – all is in flux, in continuous change.

Again, the really permanent would also be a source of *lasting* satisfaction but as we have seen, such satisfaction is not to be obtained from the usual search among things, places and people so that it is true to say that dissatisfaction arises from the transitory. As things, etc., are not perceived as changing, we not only pervertedly think that they do not change (and are disappointed when they shatter our expectations) but also conclude from the projection of our own 'I-sense' on to such people and things, that they have an inward permanence, an undying essence or noumena. Because most people do not possess the faculty of Insight which penetrates beyond appearances and reveals the world as it really is, so it is not commonly realized that objects: a Rolls Royce, or a daisy, or Mr Jones, or a mosquito, or me, or this earth, or the universe—are not unitary 'things' all-of-a-lump but are composed in reality of hosts of conditions related together. A moment or two's thought about this, may dispose readers to agree. The trouble is that intellectual agreement with regard to the Perversions and especially this one, is certainly not enough.

Lastly, the unlovely is seen as beautiful. Not aware of the changeful nature of things, not seeing that beauty now, will tomorrow be withered, persons and things are siezed on as really beautiful. This body, for instance may, while it is young and unwrinkled, appear pleasant to look at but one does not, regarding it in this way, note two important facts: first, that it is inevitably progressing to decay, disease, old age and finally death, in which states it is never thought beautiful—but this we forget due to this perversion; and again, it is even now composed of bits and pieces which we may know are there, but which we have not seen (for instance, our own lungs or entrails), and which certainly most people would not like to see. The skin hides much, which if it were laid out on a table in front of us, would very probably make us sick. And yet this is our beautiful body and it is the same with the other beautiful bodies to which we are attached. This is a good

example of the unlovely regarded as being lovely. This does not mean that people and things in the world are ugly, nor does it affirm that ugliness is ultimate in the world, but it does indicate that the true aesthetic perception is akin to Insight—that is, a perception not distorted by this Perversion. When such is the case, the unlovely is known as such and attachments for it are abandoned, while on the other hand, true beauty is perceived unobstructed by thoughts connected with desire. This particular Perversion is not *doctrinal*, teaching the nature of reality but *methodological*, showing how one should abandon desires for what is not really worth desiring.

### THREE MARKS OF EXISTENCE

When the first three modes of the Perversions no longer mislead one, three related insights are obtained into the nature of all reality: it is seen that things and people are *Impermanent*, that while craving persists there is *Unsatisfactoriness* (*dukkha*) and that no underlying essences are found in things and people—the Teaching of *No-self*.

These are called the Three Marks of Existence\* and should be examined a little more fully as the Insight Meditations called Clear Seeing\* are aimed at uncovering them. It is not possible to discern them however, without first calming the agitated mind.

Regarding the first one, though we may see leaves on a tree, some young and unfolding, some mature, while others are sere and yellow, impermanence does not strike home in our hearts. Although our hair changes from black, to grey, to white over the years, we do not realize what is so obviously being preached by this change—impermanence. There is a vast difference between knowing in the mind or admitting with the tongue the truth of Impermanence, and actually realizing it constantly in the heart. The trouble is that while intellectually we may accept impermanence as a valid truth, emotionally we do not admit it, specially in regard to 'I' and

'mine'. But whatever our unhealthy (unskillful) emotions of Greed, etc., may or may not admit, impermanence remains a truth, and the sooner we come to *realize* through Insight that it is a truth, the happier we shall be, because our mode of thought will thus be nearer to reality.

Secondly it is easy to *say*, 'Oh yes, unsatisfactory conditions (dukkha) are produced by craving'. But it is not enough to leave it at that. The craving has really to be rooted out of mental states, again by Insight, so that dukkha ceases to affect one. This is only a Truth when one sees with Wisdom that it is so. Until that time, it remains a teaching, albeit a good one, from which much sound guidance may be obtained for the conduct of life.

The last is most difficult to understand. The former two may be mentally accepted after certain data from sense-experience has been examined but the Mark of No-self cannot be substantiated so easily. It has in fact, to be realized after prolonged Meditation and profound Insight, and will come to be known when the other related Marks are fully realized. It is also the most emotionally disturbing of these Marks since it runs directly counter to the ordinary egocentric notions, which without thinking and ruled by the Third mode of Perversion, people usually suppose to be true. If one examines a chair, most people (except a few philosophers holding to the speculations of the Greeks), will agree that the chair cannot be found apart from its parts. Take it to pieces and one is left with legs, back, seat, cushions and so on—but 'chair' has disappeared. By chopping all these parts into little pieces, neither 'chair' nor 'legs, back' etc., can be found—only pieces of wood. Going further, no chair at all can be perceived after all these pieces of wood have been burnt and only ashes remain . . . . . and so on, for such processes are without end. When one examines things in this light, only processes are to be found, no actual, abiding 'things'. Now, this is all very well applied to a chair but not at

all acceptable to many people if it is applied to one's precious 'self'. Break it up, what does one find? Lord Buddha in one classification, enumerated Five Heaps\*: a physical body; feelings, pleasant, painful and neither; recognition of things perceived through the senses and memory; habits and tendencies; and discrimination by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Now where is one's precious 'self'? The self, from this illustration, is seen to be compounded of different factors and while it does exist relatively, our great mistake is to suppose that it exists as a 'thing', as a whole, or that there is some fine substance or entity which really is my 'self'. Apart from the above exposition, the final objection to this is that Transcendental Insight does not reveal it and even the conceited may concede that the Wisdom of Lord Buddha is superior to their own. At every stage of analysis, which for the uprooting the Perversions must proceed with oneself and not be exercised upon chairs, it is found that whatever are the parts with which one is dealing, they are all without self, even down to the most minute particles or to the most fleeting of events, they will be seen by intense Insight, to be void of self, to be no-self. We shall, in Part III, consider No-self and Voidness again.

### **THE PERFECTABILITY OF MAN**

One last thing will be mentioned as a belief of Buddhists, indeed it is fundamental to their religion, that is: the perfectability of man. They are far from regarding themselves as weak and sinful, a doctrine which can easily have disastrous results upon those believing it. While Buddhists certainly recognize the presence of evil, it is, they perceive, their own unskill which is responsible for this and therefore it is this unskill in the individual minds which must be tackled.

As evidence that this can be done, they have before them unparalleled and unbroken lines of spiritual teachers who from the Lord Buddha down to the present day proclaim the Buddhist doctrine as something practical for anyone who wishes to apply it to his own life. Doing so, he may know the Enlightenment attained by Lord Buddha, so that he does not only benefit himself but is a beacon in the darkness to guide others (1). The static conception of character bound up with ideas of permanence and the existence of, a soul-self, and which really underlines the English saying, "Leopards cannot change their spots" is far from Buddhist thought and practice. Throughout His Teaching, Lord Buddha encourages everyone to strive ever to realize a higher state of perfection until the supervention of Transcendent Wisdom.

## PART II.

### WHAT DO BUDDHISTS PRACTISE?

Buddhists practise in order to realize what is at first, believed. In this way belief is not divorced from practice. It would not be true to say that a Buddhist convinces himself of the truth of the Buddha's Teachings, since the course of practice prescribed for him includes the development of Wisdom which uproots mere convictions while establishing one in the secure Refuge of Nirvāna.

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(1) It has been said, both in Lord Buddha's day and recently, that Buddhism is 'selfish'. If ever a charge was anomalous, it is this one! Before one can give spiritual help to others, self-help is essential. Lord Buddha said: "How can one man stuck in the mud pull out another man stuck in the mud?" Buddhists are convinced that saving others can only be effectively accomplished when one has gone at least some way towards saving oneself. The latter sentence shows the inadequacies of English, for to save oneself in the Buddhist sense is completely to have up-rooted even the slighted conceptions of self, to be utterly selfless, to devote 'oneself' to the "welfare and happiness of gods and men."

## THE GEM OF THE ORDER

3. The last of the Three Refuges, the Jewel of the Order is still to be considered. It has been left over for this section as it is more appropriate to consider it in this section on practice.

The Teachings of the Buddha are for everyone. (1) No one has ever been excluded from becoming a Buddhist by sex, race or colour. It depends upon the individual Buddhist (and his circumstances) whether he remains a layman or becomes a monk (or nun). The benefit which each class derives from the other is mutual: the laymen give robes, food, shelter and medicine to the monks and these are a monk's supports for his life. The giving of food is seen everywhere in Siam between six and seven every morning (2) but robes, shelter and medicines are given on other occasions. The monks (and nuns) on their part, give something most precious to the laity: the Teaching as they have studied and practised it. Thus lay Buddhists can easily find advice and help in a monastery from one of the teachers there or perhaps

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(1) There is a strange idea current in some places, that Buddhism is only for monks. Nothing could be further from the truth. As we hope to show here, there is something for everyone to do, whether monk or laity. It is true that many of the Buddha's discourses are addressed to monks but this does not preclude the use of their contents by the laity. How much of Buddhist Teaching one applies to one's life, while to some extent depending on environment: work, family, etc., in the case of lay people, does to a greater extent depend on one's keenness and determination. The monk is in surroundings more conducive to the application of the Buddha's Teachings as he should have less distractions than do the laity. Even among monks, ability and interest naturally vary, especially when there are 200,000 of them as in Siam.

(2) Buddhist monks and nuns do not *beg* for their Food nor are they beggars. A strict code of conduct regulates a monk's round to gather food. He may not for instance, make any noise—cry out or sing—in order to attract people's attention. He walks silently and in the case of meditating monks, with a mind concentrated on his subject of meditation, and accepts whatever people like to give him. Lord Buddha once gravely accepted the offering of a poor child who had nothing else to give except a handful of dust: the child had faith in the Great Teacher. From this one learns that it is not *what* is given that is important, but rather *how* a thing is given. The monk is to be content with whatever he is given, regarding the food as a medicine to keep the mind-body continuum going on.

from a son, uncle or some other relative who is practising either permanently or for some time as a novice or monk. And so, a balance is preserved, each group giving to the other something necessary for livelihood.

### **SOMETHING ABOUT ITS RULES**

Monks and novices have sets of rules to guide them in their life and these being voluntarily observed as ways of self-training, may be equally voluntarily relinquished, as when a monk becomes a novice again or reverts to the state of a layman. It is a common practice for laymen to spend some time as a novice or monk, (the latter ordination is only given to persons over the age of 20 years). Usually this is done when school or college is finished, before taking up work and for a period of three or four months from approximately July to October or November. This period, when monks must reside in one monastery is known in Siam as 'Pansā', or the Rains Retreat and is meant to be a period devoted to learning, the practice of meditation or some other intensified spiritual activity. After this yearly Rains Retreat is over, monks are free to go to other monasteries or into the forest as they wish (unless they are still 'new' monks in the charge of their teacher). In the Buddhist Order, monks do not possess money (or should not) and so observe 'poverty' in the sense of Christian monasticism. As monks, they must of course, refrain from any sort of sexual intercourse, thus observing 'chastity'. But they have not the rule to observe 'obedience' in the Christian sense though they venerate their teachers deeply. When therefore they have some learning and experience, knowing their rules well, they are free to wander here and there as they choose, seeking good teachers, or practising by themselves.

Mention should be made of the four most important rules in the monk's code, for breaking which he is expelled from the Order, never being able in this life to become a monk again. These four rules are: (1) Never to have any sexual relations, (2) Never deliberately to kill a man, or to order other persons to kill, either other human beings or themselves, (3) Never to take anything that does not belong

to one with the intention of possessing it oneself, (4) Never to claim *falsely* any spiritual attainment, powers, or degree of Enlightenment ( he is excused if he is mad, conceited or not serious ).

A monk's actual possessions are very few and any other objects around him should be regarded by him as on loan from the Order. He possesses eight articles : An outer double-thick 'cloak', an upper-robe, an under-robe, a bowl to collect food, a needle and thread to repair his robes, a girdle to hold up his under-robe, a razor, and a water-strainer to exclude small creatures from his drinking water so that neither they, nor himself, are harmed.

As to his duties, they are simple but not easy to perform. He should endeavour to have *wide learning and deep understanding* of all that His Teacher the Enlightened One, has taught ; he should *practise* the Teaching, observing Morality, strengthening Meditation and developing Wisdom ; he should *realize* the Buddha's Teachings according to his practice of them ; and finally, depending upon his abilities, he should *teach* others for their welfare and happiness, by his own example, by preaching, by writing books, etc.

#### **REFUGE IN THE NOBLE ORDER**

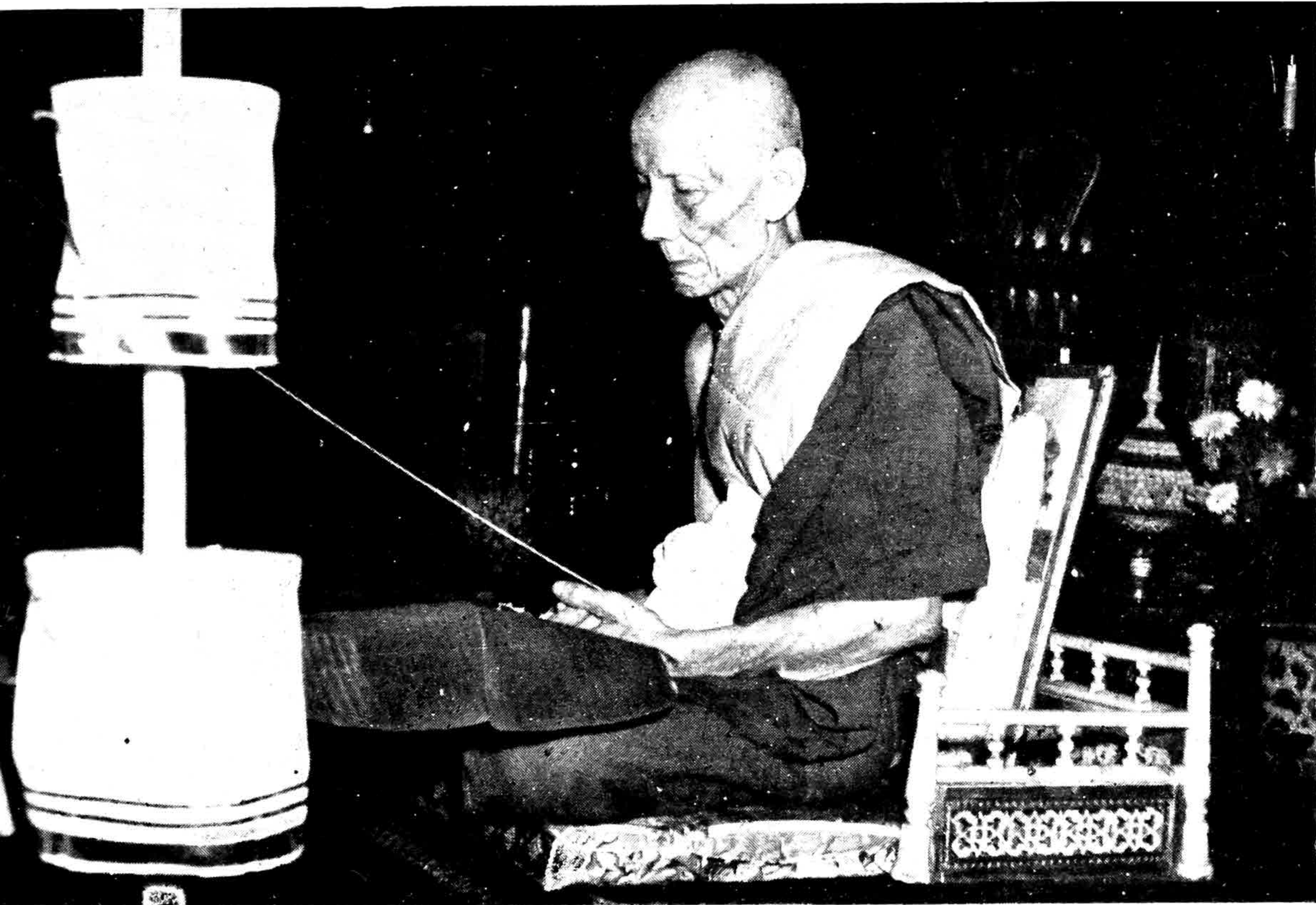
So far, the ordinary Order of monks has been described but when going for Refuge to the Order, one should not think of Taking Refuge in these monks for they are, most of them, worldings\*. A few, however are Noble\*, the true holiness experienced after the fire of Supreme Wisdom has burnt up the defilements\*. Among the laity too, there may be those who are Noble and they together with the Noble monks form the Noble Order which, since it is composed of those who have freed themselves from the bondage of all worlds, is truly a secure Refuge. That lay-people may attain this supermundane Nobility should be sufficient to prove that this Teaching is meant for them, as well as for the members of the Order.



The Supreme Patriarch, Head of the Siamese Order of monks.



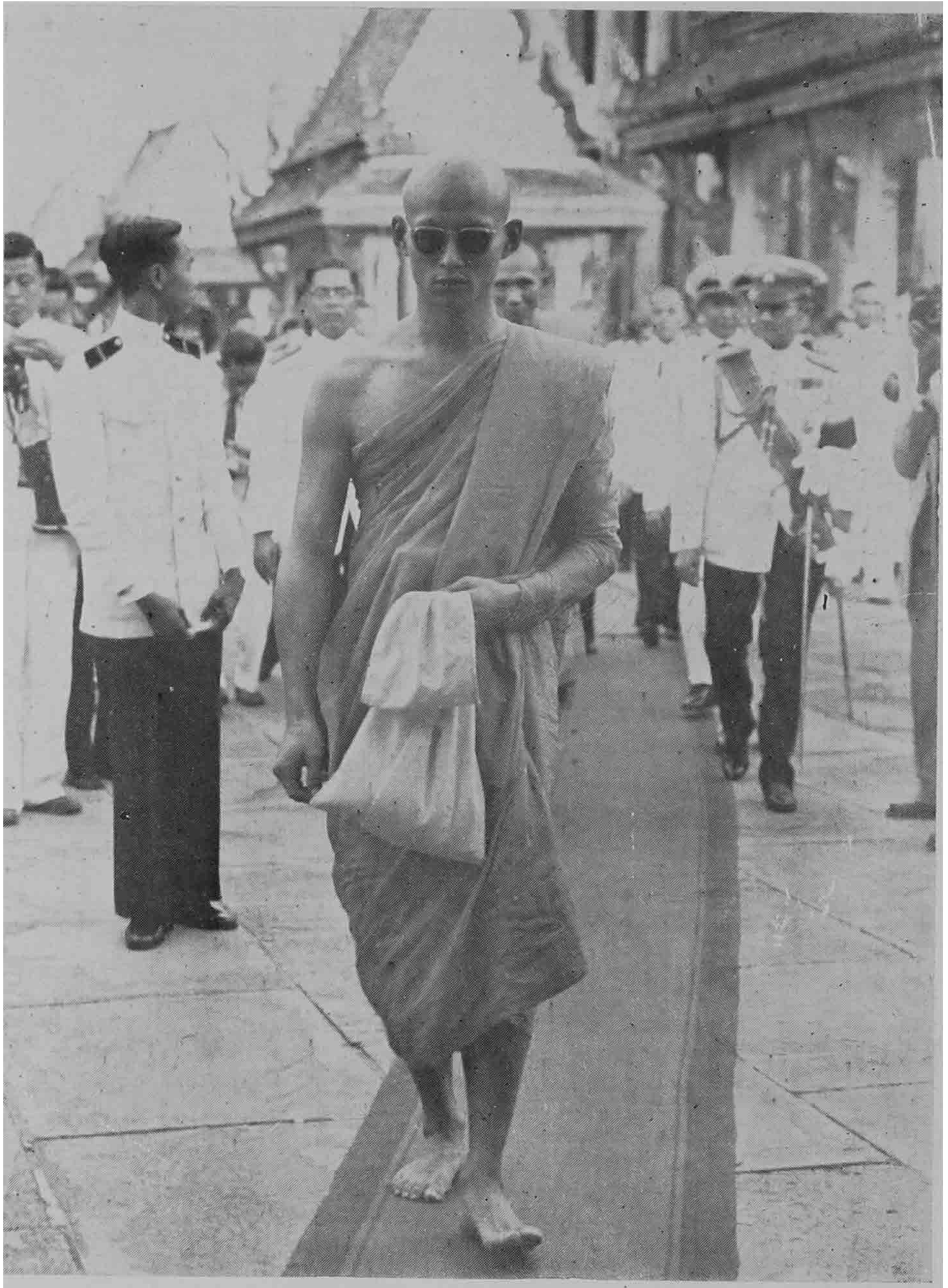
Venerable Acaraya Mun,  
a leading meditation teacher in the North-East.



A monk in deep meditation practice.



A monk in his lodging



H.M. The King after his ordination as a monk for a short while.

The Jewel of the Noble Order has known many great teachers from the immediate disciples of Lord Buddha, such as the Venerables: Aññā-Kondañña, Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Subhuti, Mahākassapa and Venerable Nuns as Mahāpajāpatī, Khemā, Uppalavannā, Dhammadinnā, with laymen such as the benevolent Anāthapindika and famous laywomen as was Visākhā; and this great procession of Enlightened disciples still continues down the ages to the present day. Those who have done many meritorious deeds in their past lives could, if they search, with a sincere desire to learn, find in Siam today a good teacher.

Mention should be made in conclusion, that in Siam at the present time there are no fully-ordained Buddhist nuns, their line of ordination having died out in Ceylon over one thousand years ago. Another line of nun-ordination does however survive in China, Viet-Nam and Korea and this might be introduced to Siam later. Buddhist nuns in Siam now, are Eight-Precept laywomen, wearing white garments, shaving the head and devoting themselves to the religious life.

Beyond describing Buddhist beliefs and their basis in the Triple Gem or Threefold Refuge, it is now time to outline what Buddhists practise in order to realize the Teachings of the Enlightened One and so substantiate within their own experience, the doctrines which initially they believed,

As a frame for the vast mass of teachings which would qualify to be considered here, an ancient threefold summary of the Teaching is used : Morality, Meditation and Wisdom. Lord Buddha has concisely formulated them in a verse famous in all Buddhist lands :

“ All evils they should not be done, ( refers to Morality )  
The skillful it should be increased, ( to Meditation )  
One’s mind it should be purified, ( to Wisdom )  
So do the Buddhas teach.”

These are known as the Three Trainings but since the last one, Wisdom, is both mundane and Transcendental, four sections have been devised as comprising the range (though far from the full substance) of Lord Buddha's Teachings: Worldly Wisdom, Morality, Meditation and Transcendental Wisdom.

## **1. Worldly Wisdom**

This is quite naturally present when anyone begins to be interested in Buddhist Teachings. From his reading, from conversations with Buddhists, from lectures, or in other ways, he comes to appreciate the Teachings for such characteristics as their appeal to clear-thinking; their fearlessness of free enquiry; their tolerance; their wide understanding of others' religions; their helpfulness in daily life; their practicability; and the gradual Way in which they proceed, one factor leading on to the next – such points as these may impress even a casual enquirer. An earnest student will pursue such matters and find even greater delight in the ever-deepening vistas of the Buddhist Way.

In such ways, worldly wisdom, or the ability to think clearly and understand comprehensively is developed. Traditionally, two categories of this are given: 'Hearing' Wisdom\* and 'Thinking' Wisdom\*. The first is the accumulation of raw facts though learning while the second is the relating of them together to form new knowledge. In this way, two aspects of mental activity are developed—memory and intellectual effort. Both of these, combining in worldly wisdom, are useful for the student of Buddhism. It is noteworthy that Buddhist practice does not impose any intellectual checks on its followers for it is intellect refined which is transmuted into Supreme Wisdom. Buddhists may, and indeed are, encouraged to ask any questions they wish. They may differ intellectually in various ways and this results in the different

stresses laid upon various aspects of Lord Buddha's Teachings by the numerous schools of Buddhist thought existing today. However, the goal in all cases is recognized to be the same—Enlightenment, and the faith of followers of these different schools must in any case be sufficiently strong to ensure their progress on the Buddha's way. A Buddhist's worldly wisdom, whatever school he supports, is primarily to appreciate the necessity of doing something about his life and so come to *practise* what the Buddha has taught.

### **MONASTERIES AND SCHOOLS**

Two other matters may be briefly considered in this section. The first is a fact which is readily noticeable everywhere in Siam: that where there is a Wat (monastery), there will also be a school. This fact stresses that the Buddhist religion and education are inseparable. It has never been characteristic of Buddhist practice to lead the blind masses along in ignorance for the simple fact that the Teaching is not merely to be accepted, it is to be understood and then, realized within oneself. In order to accomplish this, the ignorant (even if faithful) mind, is well-nigh useless; what is required is a mind opened by a broad education of well-studied subjects. An open mind, will easily perceive the truths taught by Lord Buddha when the mundane wisdom is well-developed. Hence the schools attached to monasteries.

### **THE PLACE OF GIVING**

A second matter connected with worldly wisdom and an integral part of Buddhist practice is, Giving\*. This may also be called Generosity and stands at the head of a path often advocated for lay Buddhist practice: Giving, Morality and Meditation. Why is Giving so important? If we are to make any progress along the Buddha's Way, we shall have to reverse our 'normal' worldly way. Worldliness talks about 'getting', the Way about 'Giving'. To get more and more things

means that besides becoming in the ordinary way more self-fish, we are also buttressing our feelings of 'I am' with a heap of possessions which proclaim to us, and to everyone else, 'I have'. Now this will not lead even to worldly happiness as the deluded suppose, let alone permit one to go along a spiritual Way. The latter requires a strong sense of relinquishment, a loosening of the bonds which bind one to things and a consequent softening of the heart which will lead steadily, and surely in the direction of the knowledge that 'I am' is really false, (ultimately one comes to know that no one possesses anything at all at any time, see IV, Perfection of Giving). So, the objective of Giving is to break down, or at least make a start on the destruction of the prison walls of 'I have'. Apart from this explanation of the basis of Giving, it is done from the heart, proceeding from a pure faith which holds that the act of giving is meritorious, that the persons to whom the Giving is directed, (often monks and nuns) are pure and striving to lead a good life and that the effect upon the giver is to ensure a happy rebirth, if nothing more. The Buddhist practice of Giving never expects any return, a gift is given: the only return that one gets from giving is in one's own heart which is purified thereby, for one rejoices in a skillful action, and the heart then becomes flexible and one's ways more easy to train. What greater return could there be than this?<sup>(1)</sup> Ease of training means initially ease of keeping the precepts pure and unbroken and so we have passed from Worldly Wisdom and yet invaluable, to our next topic, Morality.

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(1) 'Merit' tends to be looked upon as an invisible substance which one somehow stores up for future happiness. As in many misunderstandings, this one also has a basis of truth — happiness is derived from skillful actions. But it is much better just *to give* — and never to consider what one is going to get out of it. Paradoxically, a donor who gives out of real love, faith or pure charity, and does not think at all of 'his merit' gains much greater merit from his altruistic act than the donor who thinks of merit-making for himself.

## 2. Morality\*

### PRECEPTS

The moral code of the Buddhist religion is not an end in itself but is practised as with all else in this Way, as a stepping-stone to reach Enlightenment. There are different classes of Precepts for Buddhists following the Teaching upon different levels. The Precepts are in no sense 'commandments' for no one has commanded that one should keep them. Lord Buddha advises us for our own happiness and for that of others that we should observe certain 'ways of training'\* as the precepts are called.

The Five Precepts\* which are the basic category for laymen are all prefaced by the declaration, "I undertake the step of training to refrain from....". The five immoral actions which a lay-Buddhist trains himself to avoid are: Hurting and Killing<sup>(1)</sup>; Taking what is not given; Improper sexual relations; False Speech (including lies, harsh

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(1) Some bring up the old 'suppose' argument here. "Suppose that a town is infested by plague-bearing rats, does this precept mean that a Buddhist cannot kill them?" To begin with, there is little point in arguing about statements opening with the word 'suppose' as they are quite hypothetical and frequently unprofitable. However, in this case the Buddhist attitude for observance of this precept should be clearly understood. A most striking feature of Lord Buddha's Teachings, is their flexibility and this naturally applies also to the Precepts. These should not be preserved in a wooden, unthinking fashion but should be so practised that they are easily adapted to every situation. It is good to feel shame and even an inability to kill in normal circumstances but when not only oneself but many others are threatened by a mortal infection, then regretfully one must be adaptable. There is no principle here to be blindly followed—"that you must do this or not do that" for Buddhists, using wisdom and compassion, have themselves to decide what is the best thing to do.

This applies also to war. There is a discourse by Lord Buddha preserved in Sanskrit, in which he allows that it is right to conduct a *defensive* war in aid one's country *but only* after every possible method maintaining the peace, and all negotiations, have failed. There can be no hypocritical justifications here of what is really aggression dressed up as 'defence'. In *no* circumstances whatever are wars of aggression justified.

words, tale-bearing and idle gossip); and Taking beers and wines, distilled liquors or drugs which bring about heedlessness and becloud the mind. They may be taken as a block of five together in which case if one is broken, all five are soiled; or they may be taken individually when the breaking of one does not mean that all the Precepts are cancelled. In any case, whether one or all are broken, they must be renewed by taking them again from a monk, often one's own teacher. (In Siam there is no difficulty in this as there are many monks, but in the West and other places where the Order is scarce, the Precepts may be repeated by oneself in front of a Buddha-image after showing the proper mark of respect to the Teacher by prostration).

There is an idea that these are easy precepts to keep since their formulation is so brief. When however, they are explained at length, it will be seen that 'easy' is not quite the right word for them. To illustrate this the meaning of each of the precepts will be slightly expanded.

1. 'I undertake the step of training to refrain from killing' — so reads the first precept. Few people's hatred is so unrestrained that they butcher beings indiscriminately: those who do are usually confined in mental hospitals. Animal-killers such as butchers store up for themselves an unenviable and painful future as result of their actions. Whether man or animal, one cannot kill *deliberately* without the factor of hatred being active in the mind. Most people will of course say: 'But I am not a maniac or a butcher' inferring thereby that they easily keep this precept pure. They should make further enquiry: What of that fly or mosquito that so annoyed one that a heavy palm descended on it crushing its life? Flies and mosquitoes have nervous systems, they feel pain and moreover, they want to live, not to die, so do all the animals slaughtered every day by the millions just to please man's

tongue and belly. Then there is hunting, and mass destruction of insects, 'Pests' man calls them but they also have a craving for life just as man has.

Life is easily taken but impossible for man to give. As he does not enjoy dying himself, it is unwise for man to use his many knowledges to destroy others. And if one is so mild-natured that one does not kill, then not-hurting also comes within the scope of this precept. One may hurt other beings physically, or mentally, with actions or with speech...

Perhaps after all, this precept is not so simple.....

2. 'I undertake the step of training to refrain from taking what is not given'. This is much more than not stealing. Careless borrowing, for instance, will be included here when subconsciously, one does not have any intention to return the article. Also, fraudulent business dealings which some shop-keepers and merchants practise, should be included. The under-payment of employees is another case where this precept is broken.

As one wishes others to respect those things which one considers as one's own, then it is better to be perfectly straight with what belongs to others.

3. 'I undertake the step of training to refrain from immoral sexual behaviour.'

This is usually interpreted as refraining from adultery, a very potent cause of sorrow, not only to those who commit it but also to the faithful member of a marriage. The sorrows of the guilty parties may not be immediately obvious but the sorrows of the innocent are immediate and often disastrous. Much anguish, even suicide and mental unbalance, would be avoided if this precept was kept strictly. There are also the sorrows of children in such broken marriages. The loss of one parent frequently leaves a deep scar upon young minds and may be the cause of much trouble in their later lives. Then there are economic difficulties which may come

about when marriages are broken in this way. A whole heap of grief is caused just because men and women cannot keep in check their desire for sensual pleasures and have not contentment, the positive counterpart of this precept, for their marriage partner.

All sorts of other misbehaviour are also included here: young unmarried people should wisely restrain themselves, and not get involved in anything which may prove a bondage for them. Restraint is good, and it should be restraint not merely of outward action but of sensual desire, counted in Buddhist practice among the unwholesome mental factors.

4. 'I undertake the step of training to refrain from false speech'.

This will be one of the most difficult of the precepts for most people to keep, as it includes not only lying but: harsh speech, backbiting and idle gossip. The tongue is not so easily kept in check especially when one is upset and the less it is checked, the more upset both oneself and others will be. Lying itself has some subtle shades not easily distinguished unless one is very honest with oneself. Harsh speech is indulged in when angry and one blames, grumbles at, or openly abuses others, possibly using swear-words of unsavoury meaning. Those little and so interesting stories one likes to relate about other's faults, how sweet to do so and how much others enjoy listening: this is backbiting. Last, but not least, is the time-wasteing idle chatter about little nothings which are scarcely worthy of words: human beings should put the precious treasure of speech and also fleeting time to better use.

Damage is done to oneself by not restraining the tongue: others will think that one is untrustworthy, violent, cunning, or a fool, while they also suffer from any violation of this precept.

5. 'I undertake the step of training to refrain from fermented and distilled liquors, and from drugs which confuse the mind.'

All the above four precepts depend for their purity, upon constant vigilance and if the mind is overcome by intoxicants, then what harm may not result?

A Tibetan tale is told about this :

It appears that a man of that country had aroused the enmity of some demon. This being plagued him and told him that he would only leave him in peace if the man consented to break one of these Five Precepts.

Now that man was a sincere Buddhist layman who had successfully kept his precepts pure. He thought: 'I cannot break the first for to kill a being is a most terrible thing. As to the second, I have never stolen anything and it is a great crime. I have always been faithful to my wife and we are happy together. So how can I break the third one? Then the fourth if I break it, is sure to make someone unhappy and bring myself a bad name. What about the fifth, hmm.....?' And he decided that one little drop of liquor would not do any harm and would at the same time, satisfy that devil.

He had never before tasted alcohol and the little drop that he sipped intrigued him by its taste. He thought: 'This tastes good, a little more won't harm me'. And so, a little more, and more.....until he was rolling drunk.

Passing a tinker on his way home, he stole some trinkets. Reaching at last, his house, he found his wife absent and noticed for the first time how pretty his neighbour's wife appeared. Going to her, he gave her the ornaments and they entered her house. After some time she proposed some food, so he took an axe and hacked off a goat's head. Finally, the tinker came up with officials to accuse him of the theft, and he roundly denied it, loudly declaring his innocence.

And so all the Five Precepts were broken.....

Keeping these Precepts pure is the mark of a real human being and of one who in the event of not accomplishing anything greater, will certainly be reborn as a man. Those among men whose standard of conduct does not reach up to the level of the Five Precepts, do not themselves qualify again for human birth as their minds have become sub-human. The effect of keeping these precepts is to remove the tensions and conflicts which so often exist between 'what I should do' (to conduct myself as a human being) and 'what I actually do' (descending to animal behaviour etc.). Sincerely trying to perfect these Precepts, the gap between these two is removed and as a result, instead of much energy being wasted in the warfare of mental conflicts, one experiences a greater sense of tranquillity, of well-being.

Taking these Precepts preceded by the Three Refuges, constitutes the simple ceremony in which a person declares himself a follower of Lord Buddha's Teachings.\* With the Three Refuges he establishes his faith in His Teacher, the Teaching and those who have been taught, and then taking upon himself the Five Precepts, he takes the first step towards establishing those Three Refuges of faith as Three Jewels of inward understanding. The Five Precepts are in fact the first indispensable step for reaching the ultimate goal of Supreme Enlightenment.

#### **BASIS OF MORALITY**

At one time philosophers declared that Morality is an impossibility unless given by a Creator in the form of commandments; as without either fear of their Maker or his commands, it was argued that man would run wild, become bestial. As Buddhism recognizes no Supreme Being and therefore no commandments from him, the question arises as to why moral precepts are kept by Buddhists. That they are kept is substantiated by the happiness of the Siamese people

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\* For this matter set out in detail, see Appendix.

and many other Buddhists, a fact which so much impresses foreigners. Such happiness comes from maintaining a good standard of morality not only in this life but is also the result of skillful action in past existences.

Buddhist ethics are founded upon three important principles :

a) One does not like others to inflict any sort of hurt upon oneself. What one does not like oneself, one should not do to others. This is the famous principle of Non-harming\*. Breaking the above Precepts, it will easily be seen that either oneself, others or both, will come to harm. True morality depends on neither hurting oneself nor others and when one does this it will be possible to live harmoniously in one's surroundings.

This principle has had a singular effect upon the history of Buddhism. Non-harming was exemplified in the perfect life of the Buddha and has been maintained by His disciples down to the present day. As a result, there has never been a Holy War, Crusade, or persecution of others (no imprisonments, burnings, tortures have ever been imposed upon those of other faiths), nor more remarkably, have there been any intersectarian wars between the different branches of the Buddha's Teaching. All such 'religious' strife which is really the outcome of minds still strong in hatred, has never been known in Buddhism. Lord Buddha taught his disciples to live in peace with others and not even to quarrel with words against them, and, by and large, his followers have been faithful to His instructions, being more concerned with plucking out the Root of Hatred from their own minds than with venting spleen upon others. In Siam this tradition of tolerance has long been upheld by the country's Kings. In particular, mention should be made of a King about 300 years ago — King Narai, who issued edicts giving protection to the newly-introduced Catholicism, and to the more recent pronouncement by Kings of the present dynasty, especially those

of King Mongkut and of his son, King Chulalongkorn. In all Buddhist countries the same history of peace and tolerance has prevailed and of this Buddhists may justly be proud; it is the result of Lord Buddha's wise instructions and their own vigorous applications of this principle of Non-harming.<sup>(1)</sup>

b) The second spring of Buddhist ethics is Compassion. One sees that beings are suffering enough already and that the skillful thing to do is to aid — and certainly not to break the Precepts which will only make them more miserable. Buddhist compassion is not only sympathizing with the sufferings of others — a rather passive attitude, but it is actively making an effort to remove those sufferings. Hence the Buddhist practice particularly stressed in Siam called the Five Ennobling Virtues\* of the positive counterparts of the Five Precepts, (they can hardly be practised though, before Precepts of abstention are well-established). They are: Loving — kindness — Compassion, Generosity, Contentment, Truthfulness, Mindfulness: all of these qualities are mentioned elsewhere in this book.

Compassion in Buddhism being related to Non-harming, has precluded all possibility for the arising of that peculiar religious perversion, the 'compassion' which avers that it is necessary to maim or destroy others for the sake of their own ultimate good or salvation.

c) Thirdly, as we have already related, it is the first step on the Way. Without pure Morality, it is positively dangerous to practise Meditation and doubtful in any case, whether much could ever come of such practice. Unless a basis of uprightness in moral matters has been made secure, it is impossible to realize Transcendental Wisdom and so, Liberation. Thus the attainment of the very goal of Buddhist endeavour depends

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(1) For a fuller treatment of this subject and how tolerance is related to different Buddhist Teachings see my: *Tolerance, a Study from Buddhist Sources*. Rider and Company, London, 1964.

upon an initial and sustained effort to maintain and to strengthen the emotional attitude which declares that sincere moral conduct depends upon Non-harming, of oneself and of others.

It has already been emphasized that moral activity of this sort should pervade all aspects of one's life. In speech, this is guaranteed by keeping the fourth Precept unbroken and moral bodily action is ensured by the practice of the first three Precepts. It only remains to note that Lord Buddha also emphasized the need for purity in livelihood. By this, he declared was meant that His followers should abstain from these ways of earning a living: Dealing in weapons, in poisons (when sold for the purpose of killing), in liquor or drugs, (as we have seen in the tale, when all the first four Precepts are easily broken), trading in human beings, as slaves, and making money from prostitutes' earnings. If restraint in these matters was well observed in this world, no one can deny that it would be a much happier and more peaceful place in which to live. Buddhists in their practice of these very practical ethical injunctions strive to make it so.

Besides the Five Precepts just mentioned, reference must be made briefly to some others. On Full Moon, Half Moon and two intermediate days in the lunar month (but principally on the former two), some Buddhists go to their temples and declare their desire to observe for that day, extra Precepts. These are the Eight Precepts\* formed by converting the third of the Five into "total sexual abstention" and then adding three more: to refrain from taking food after noon (until the next morning), to refrain from seeing shows, cinema, dances and all sorts of entertainments and not to sleep on a soft or luxurious bed. These are generally observed by devotees for one day after which they take back upon themselves the Five Precepts. While they are practising the Eight, they have a chance to stay in some quiet place, often in a monastery and there devote their time to meditation, study or listening to the preaching of monks, all of which may be difficult for them to do

at other times. By this practice if undertaken constantly, the mental level is definitely improved and the rebirth traditionally resulting is to arise among the gods of Sensual Desire.

Slightly more rigorous are the Ten Precepts binding on a Novice.\* The former Eight are made into nine by splitting the precept on shows and ornaments, and one other is added: to refrain from handling gold and silver. By this is meant of course, money. Monks and novices who are strict in their practice of the Teaching do not give themselves the chance to handle it simply by never possessing it. It is very wholesome to have the experience of being without money, for while one has it, desires may be gratified and one suffers from the delusion that money, in buying things one wants, also buys happiness. When one is without money, it is then necessary to fall back upon one's own skills, and where these do not provide what is needed, to cultivate that excellent virtue—contentment. This is of course specially for the monk's way of life and is not meant to be observed by lay-people.

At the age of twenty, a novice may become a monk and in doing so, agrees to strive to observe the 227 (or 250 according to different transmissions), Precepts of his special code into which the above Ten Precepts are incorporated. We shall not enter into a description of these except to note that the first four have been mentioned already. It is worth noting that many of these rules (75 or 100) are concerned with good manners and correct deportment. Undoubtedly, these precepts have had their effect upon the politeness, not only of be found among the monks where it is an integral part of their culture, but also among Siamese laymen, for foreigners coming mostly into contact with them, are frequently impressed by their courtesy.

As the preceding pages have shown though very briefly, the practice of Morality is, in the Buddhist Teaching not a stern repressive code but consists of dynamic 'ways of training' leading forward not merely to an increase of happi-

ness here, but much more important, to the successful practice of Meditation, with which the next few pages will be concerned.

### **3. Meditation\***

This word in English is a very inadequate rendering of several much more precise terms in Pali and Sanskrit. Concentration, Absorption, even Ecstasy have been used to try to render the Buddhist meaning in a more accurate manner. Actually no English term exists to do this, and we shall have to make shift with 'Meditation' and to colour it with its particularly Buddhist connotations.

#### **DEFINITION**

Meditation as practised by Lord Buddha and the sages who have followed Him, may be summed up very easily: 'one-pointedness of mind', though this is not attained by most people without a great deal of effort. The ordinary common person supposes, as he has little evidence to the contrary, that the world he perceives is the only one: meditation, on the other hand, if it is practised will show that the spiritual universe is very much greater than ordinary thought conceives. Is it then to attain such knowledge that Buddhists practise meditation? The answer is very definitely, No! The heaven worlds so beautiful and happy can easily snare a meditator and prevent his further progress. Meditation has as its aim the stilling of the mind's restless wandering so that the grosser mental hindrances\* (Sense Desire, Ill-will, Sloth and Torpor, Restlessness and Worry, and Sceptical Doubt), are removed. The ordinary man's mind may be compared to a pond of muddy water ruffled unceasingly by a strong wind. When one enters a state of meditation and the senses are withdrawn from their objects, the wind of desire is stilled. When this happens, the ripples of hindrances cease to disturb

the mind. The mind is now like a calm but still muddy pond. This condition does, however, give one a chance to develop Wisdom and this quality is like some substance which will clear the pool, making it pellucid, so that even the smallest objects upon its bottom may be seen in every detail. For this reason Meditation is practised, as Wisdom is the key to Enlightenment.

Before a meditational absorption\* can be experienced, the two great hindrances which stand blocking the way of the meditator like Scylla and Charybdis must be carefully circumnavigated. These are sleepiness, slothfulness with its resulting unworkability of the mind, and the opposite hindrance of the 'monkey-mind' which restlessly clambers about from one object to another. Two things will happen when a person starts to take interest in meditation and actually sits down to try to practise: either he will gently doze off and after some time awaken with a dull feeling, remembering nothing, or else his mind will seem like an uncontrollable fountain of words, ideas, plans, pictures and memories, all demanding his attention. These are the two great obstacles to attainment. How strong they are, or which one is most strong in any one character, can only be discovered from actual practice.

The definite attainment of a Meditative Absorption means that one has broken through the Desire 'barrier' and penetrated to a different realm of things – the Realm of Form. The Meditational Absorptions, four of them, correspond to the four great levels of that heavenly realm, and are characterized by varying intensities of the following spiritual factors: Mindfulness, Happiness, Joy, One-pointedness and Equanimity.

#### **MENTAL FACTORS OF MEDITATIONAL STATES**

Mindfulness\* plays a very important part in Buddhist practice, not only of meditation but also of daily life. In the latter it is the quality of carefulness, both in respect of things

such as possessions or the actions of one's body, and of mental states, as when a Buddhist guards himself with mindfulness so that unskillful states decline or are not permitted to arise and the skillful are increased and made stable. Mindfulness answers the beginner's question, 'How can I apply the Teachings to my daily life?' By mindfulness! Some times called awareness or awakeness, this quality ensures that the Teaching is not something locked up in books but a Way intensely practical. Buddhists are taught in great detail what to be mindful of: the body, its movements and positions, its impermanence and decay, its patchwork nature; of the feelings: pleasant, painful and neither pleasant-nor painful; of the moods of the mind; and of the particular factors forming the content in any one moment of mental operation. (QUESTION POINT: THE FULL SCOPE OF MINDFULNESS IN BUDDHISM: see *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* in list of books for further reading).

As a factor of meditational states, mindfulness is intensified to become that quality which does not permit the mind to wander from one object onto another even when concentration has become most subtle. It is quite invaluable to the attainment of any sort of mind-concentration and it is surely significant that among all the Pali Discourses of Lord Buddha, those which teach Mindfulness, are held in the highest respect.

Happiness and joy\* are the best that language can do to describe experiences of subtle bliss which are scarcely describable and rarely known to those who do not practise meditation. Both factors have to be abandoned by one who would progress to even finer meditational absorptions, a difficult thing to do if one has once experienced them. Indeed many meditators get stuck at this point assuming that this blissful peace is the highest possible attainment.

One-pointedness signifies that only one object concerns the mind during its attainment of these states. It does not wander here and there as it is accustomed to do 'normally'. Before a meditational absorption can be experienced, it is absolutely essential that one-pointedness can be both attained and maintained.

Equanimity here means the perfect balance of the mental condition finally attained in the fourth of the meditational absorptions. With mindfulness and equanimity perfectly cultured in the mind, two further directions are open to the meditator. He may either ascend into the infinitudes of the Formless Realm or he may develop the Psychic Powers.\*<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) The time has come perhaps, to note a few of the mistaken notions concerning what is meant by 'meditation' in Buddhism.

Quite definitely, it is not 'Doing nothing' as anyone who tries it will find out. Just because a person's body is not jiggling around and concerned with 'doing something', some have supposed that a meditator is just excusing himself to take a rest or a little sleep on the quiet. This belief is best broken by practice!

Others think that 'Meditation' is dreaming. In dream-states the mind slips downwards and loses mindfulness. Meditational Absorptions are as we have pointed out, characterized by a vastly increased power of mindfulness.

Another popular notion talks about 'making the mind blank' and this is untrue since the perfectly meditative mind always has one object. Meditational experience is something very wonderful and not at all associated with grey dullness.

Auto-hypnosis was another scholar's 'explanation' of Buddhist meditation. Needless to say, she had never practised it herself. Hypnotic states, in common with dreams, are definitely without any mindfulness.

Another thought, more reasonable, is that meditation is like discursive prayer. Although there are discursive meditations in Buddhist practice, real meditation aims at the elimination, not encouragement, of the constant stream of words flowing through the mind.

Finally, a note on the Psychic Powers. Meditation in Buddhism is *never* practised to gain these. They may be won as the fruits of much meditative toil but their use is discouraged by the words of Lord Buddha himself. They are, of course, very interesting. They are the basis for all the tales told of 'magical' occurrences, but they are very dangerous indeed in the hands of anyone who has not developed Wisdom. A worldling who acquires them will certainly become conceited and probably use them for his own selfish purposes or else out of spite, use them against others. Even Lord Buddha, Fully Enlightened, used them very sparingly.

## PSYCHIC POWERS

The former have already been touched upon but a few words would be appropriate on the latter. These Psychic Powers are the basis of all the 'miracles' so prominent in many religious teachers' lives. They are found too in connection with Lord Buddha, His disciples and His tradition to the present day. The difference between these occurrences in non-Buddhist traditions and in Buddhism, is that in the former, they seem to be mysterious embellishments which overawe people, are inexplicable and only operate among those to whom God gives them. In the latter it is notable that Lord Buddha rarely used them and then only for some very good purpose. They are a part of mind-development which anyone sufficiently persevering may experience, and again, while Buddhism can point out a clear method to obtain these powers, practitioners are always warned that they should attach little importance to them, in fact, better disregard them altogether. Thus Buddhists are not at all in the position of Christians, as they do not feel called upon to 'explain away' as 'symbolic' or by any other means the supernormal events to be found in their scriptures as they know *how* these events are caused. The powers underlying them are considered to be sidetracks in spiritual development, which moreover, can be dangerous. Persons who possess an abundance of such powers certainly have great merit or they would not have acquired them, but those who use them freely to impress others seem to have considerably less wisdom. For Buddhists, the mind is the seat of all our troubles, it is also, through its culture that one experiences Enlightenment, and it is this mind-body complex that we have to deal with and to cure: curing of the body alone by supernormal means, (and it can be done – Christians should not doubt this or other 'miracles'), is not sufficient according to Buddhist tradition. Instead of pruning the twigs of the craving creeper with Psychic Powers, one should get to the bottom and chop at the root with the axe of Transcendental Wisdom.

## MEDITATION AS MEDICINE

Meditation in the Buddhist tradition is like medicine: as the body has certain illnesses and requires different drugs for its cure, so the different unskillful mental states require different meditational treatment. It is difficult for persons to decide by themselves which disease they are afflicted or into which character-group they fall and this is one reason why meditation should only be practised with the aid of a teacher who is qualified to judge one's character and prescribe for it accordingly. In addition, character is not a stable 'being' but an ever-changing series of processes. Meditations may guide that change and sometimes require changing themselves as one's mental state makes this necessary. Again, a teacher is essential for guidance. Finally, most people are not rooted in only one type of character but are a mixture, in which different roots become predominant at different times. We give below one of the best-known and most ancient character-classifications set out about 1500 years ago by a great teacher-monk, Buddhaghosa. It is not intended to be all-inclusive but is designed specially for meditational purposes:

### CHARACTERS AND SUITABLE PRACTICES.

	CHARACTERS ROOTED IN:	MEDITATIONS SUITABLE
<i>Three Roots of Unskill.</i>	{ <i>Greed*</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>32 Parts of the body.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Loathsomeness of Food.</i></li> </ol>
	{ <i>Hatred*</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Loving-Kindness: (Suitable for All).</i></li> <li>2. <i>Compassion.</i></li> </ol>
	{ <i>Delusion*</i>	<i>Conditioned Arising of Phenomena</i>
	<i>Faith*</i>	<i>Qualities of the Teaching.</i>
	<i>Intelligence*</i>	<i>Qualities of the Buddha.</i>
	<i>'Butterfly Mind'*</i>	<i>Mindfulness of Breathing: (Suitable for All).</i>

With training, Greed-rooted characters, cease to centre their greed upon themselves and then lavish devotion upon their ideal. They then become Faith-rooted but require learning and wisdom to balance their spiritual growth. To divert the energies of greed to more wholesome channels, the body's 32 messy bits and pieces\* are systematically brought to mind, and meditated upon until they are actually seen with meditative vision. Having done this, one relinquishes greediness for what is after all a mass of blood, skin and bones etc., and ceases to identify oneself with this body. It is also useful to cut down one's attachment to food by seeing it not as tasty, good-smelling, agreeably textured etc., but to get at the bare impression of that food which the senses receive before one's mental processes colour the whole issue with greed.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, these meditations are expedient means to unwrap Greed from its objects and so make possible an expansion of the mind's range onto objects spiritual.

The Faith-character, in the above chart, has a meditation which, when it is well-developed, will cause him to gain considerable Wisdom as balance for his character. The actual meaning of Qualities of the Teaching are not explained here in detail though a brief list is given: *Svākkhāto Bhagavatā*

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(1) Neither these practices nor any others used in Buddhism, are to be compared with the flagellations, hair shirts and other self-torture sometimes recommended in or practised by those following other religions. In such religions, the body is something distinct from mind and it tends to become, in the hands of religious fanatics, a good whipping post for troubles, the source of which is really mental. However, this is not perceived and so 'Brother Ass' is variously subjected to discomforts with the very mistaken notion of 'mortification of the flesh'. The dichotomy thus created between soul and body has had many evil results, usually not producing 'saints' as it was intended to do but only turning out self-sadists.

Mind and body are in Buddhist practice and for practical considerations, sometimes dealt with separately but it is recognized that they are a complex, one reacting upon the other. It is usual in Buddhism to work directly upon the mind rather than use bodily measures to control the mind, (the latter is known in some forms of Buddhist Yoga). The mental processes, especially the deep-seated ones, are those which have to be controlled and changed.

*dhammo*, (well-expounded by the Blessed One is the Teaching), *sanditthiko*, (having visible results in the present), *akāliko*, (a timelessly true teaching), *ehi-passiko* (a teaching to come-and-see for oneself), *opanāyiko*, (leading onward from one excellence to another), *pacattam veditabbo viññūhī'ti* (to be realized by the wise, each one for himself). These are the profound Qualities of His Teaching which Lord Buddha has declared.

The Hatred-dominated type, has to develop, in spite of his difficult character, the quality of Loving-Kindness. It is helpful for its development if he treats objects with care and mindfulness, dwells in a place where people do not arouse anger and so gradually learns patience and gentleness. A Hate-type is sharp in seeing things unlovely, unlikeable, but with practice, he may change this unhealthy characteristic to sharpness in seeing the meanings of Buddhist Teachings. He has then changed about to become one rooted in Intelligence. A person of this sort tends to be intellectually gifted but emotionally rather dry. He needs a meditation which awakes particularly the balancing emotion of faith. This is provided by the meditation on the Qualities of the Buddha:

*Itipi so Bhagavā*: (Thus indeed is the Lord:), *Arahāṃ* (a Worthy One), *Sammāsambuddho*, (a Perfectly Enlightened One), *Vijjācarana-sampanno*, (possessed of Wisdom and (good) Conduct), *Sugato* (Well-gone to Nirvāna), *Lokavidū*, (Knower of all worlds), *Anuttaro* (Unexcelled), *Purisadamma-sārathī*, (Trainer of men (who want) training), *Satthā-devamanussānaṃ* (Teacher of men and gods), *Buddho*, (the Awakened), *Bhagavā'ti*, (the Blessed Lord).

Dwelling upon this one comes to understand that in the person of the Buddha, one has not the benevolent old ascetic of some writers, not Gotama the man, nor yet an emanation of a Godhead, one has before one in this contemplation, Gotama the Perfectly Enlightened who won what is called Nirvāna, a

state beyond all discriminations (see III). A great sense of reverence is awakened by this practice, reverence which passes into devotion as one comes not merely to believe, but to understand, and from understanding in turn, humility is born. This last factor is most essential for the intellectual who easily imagines that he understands Buddhism. With him, it is as though he mistook a drop of orange juice for the whole contents of the orange, which he has not yet begun to peel. The attitude of falsely supposing that one knows all about it is easily dispelled from looking at one's own life – is it perfected yet? How concentrated is one's mind? How tranquil is one's meditation practice? Real understanding of Buddhism, not to be got merely from books, is only arrived at after considerable and persistent practice.

The person in whom the last of the Three Roots of Unskill is strong suffers from inability to understand, from dullness, from blockages in the mental works which only permit the wheels to grind on slowly. The meditation required is one which will awaken intelligence and for this, simple applications of the Conditioned Arising\* of all phenomena will prove helpful. In its simplest form the formula, already mentioned, runs thus: "This being, that becomes, from the arising of this, that arises; this not becoming, that does not become; from the ceasing of this, that ceases."\* This is the basis of Buddhist thought, this is the great fundamental Insight of Lord Buddha: that an object only arises dependent on many conditions; if they are not present, it cannot arise. Take any object: a tree, a cloud, an ant, clothes, and finally take the human body. All these 'things' (really events) arise conditionally, subsist conditionally, decline conditionally and pass away conditionally. What is said of the world of outer sense-impressions is also true of the functions of the mind. Mental states and mental processes arise due to certain conditions and pass away as those conditions pass away. We see again processes at work and through meditating upon them, Wisdom arises thus clearing away the gloom of dullness.

The last of the characters mentioned is similar to the deluded person as both delusion and the 'Butterfly Mind' (the best translation the writer can think of), have an inability to penetrate a subject. In the former case however, dullness prevented understanding, while in the latter the mind, often bright, has a momentary interest in subjects and then drops them, being incapable of persistent concentration. Such a person often has a wide accumulation of facts but is unable to relate them together and therefore has no depth of understanding. This combination of intelligence and instability calls for a practice which slows down the mind's butterfly movements and brings deep concentration. Such a meditation is the famous Mindfulness of Breathing\*(1) in which the in and out breaths are watched with mindfulness usually concentrated upon the tip of the nose though different teachers have their own methods. This method will bring peace and therefore greater understanding in its wake, much to the advantage of the butterfly-character.

Regarding the relation of the two great hindrances, sloth and restlessness, to these different characters, the former will tend to be experienced by those rooted most strongly in Greed, in Faith and in Delusion. The remaining three characters are sharper and their particular hindrance in meditation, is the devil of distraction.

As to the actual methods of practice in all these meditations, (remember the sense in which this word is used), they have not been given in this introductory book. The amount of information about these and the numerous other meditation

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(1) This should not be confused with the yogic forced-breathing practices. The latter should never be taken up without an expert teacher, and while the writer would not generally counsel anyone to practise meditation without a guide, still this Mindfulness of Breathing will not lead to any harmful results providing one does not try to force the pace. The meditation on Loving-Kindness can also well be practiced by everyone.

techniques is truly staggering. Buddhists having made a special study of this branch of religious lore for the past twenty-five centuries. Those who are interested to try for themselves the advantages of meditation, as it is a subject for practice and no amount of talking about it or reading books about it will give one knowledge of it, such earnest people, having faith in the Enlightened One, His Teaching and the Order, should find and then approach a good teacher of the subject, requesting him with the traditional formalities, to accept one as a pupil. Then, revering him and his instructions, for to the pupil he stands now in place of Lord Buddha, one should diligently put the latter into practice. After this, instead of reading books about Buddhism one may come to realize its truths in one's own heart.

#### **EXCELLENT QUALITIES ARISING FROM MEDITATION PRACTICE**

As unskillful qualities are temporarily stilled and skillful ones increased in power by meditative practice, so very great and beneficial changes are produced in the character of one who practises. For instance, once one has gained the meditative absorptions, the quality of loving-kindness becomes an integral part of one's character. In the normal way of things, people only 'love' the few people to whom they are specially attached by ties of family, etc. Such is love with sensual attachment, a limited love and those outside that love are either ignored (regarded with indifference) or disliked (regarded as enemies). Sensual love then, is not only linked to attachment but also to delusion and hatred and the person who is content with this love, pays a heavy price for it. A love without attachment is scarcely conceivable to many people but such love is much superior to the former; being without attachment, it is infinite and not confined to this or that group of beings. As it is infinite and leaves none outside it, there is no question of delusion through attachment or of hatred accompanying it. This far-reaching love\* has

an important place in Buddhist mind-development where the emotions are not neglected but purified and refined reaching their zenith in magnificent altruism of the Wisdom-being to the good of all struggling sentient creatures,<sup>(1)</sup> (*see III, Perfections*).

Patience\* is another excellent quality much-praised in Buddhist scriptures. It can only be easily developed if restlessness and hatred have already been subdued in the mind, as is done by meditation practice. Impatience which has the tendency to rush around and miss many good chances, is the result of not being able to sit still and let things sort themselves out as they will often do much better than if one tries to interfere. The patient man has many a fruit fall into his lap which the go-getter misses. One of them is a quiet mind, for impatience churns the mind up and brings with it the familiar anxiety disease of the modern business world. Patience quietly endures—it is this quality which makes it so valuable in mental training and particularly in meditation. It is no good expecting instant enlightenment after five minutes practice. Coffee may be instant but meditation is not and only harm will come of trying to hurry it up. For ages the rubbish has accumulated, an enormous pile of mental refuse and so when one comes along at first with a very little teaspoon and starts removing it, how fast can one expect it to disappear? Patience

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(1) There exists, in some quarters, the peculiar notion that Buddhism is a 'coldly rational system.' To deal with these concepts: 'cold' means unsympathetic, which a true Buddhist never is from his practice of Loving kindness. 'Rational' here seems to imply that Buddhism can all be understood with the ordinary powers of reason whereas we have been at pains to point out that true understanding comes only with Insight and as a preliminary to Wisdom, when vast areas of the mind open up, areas quite unknown by 'reason'. The parts of mind known to man normally, are as a raindrop compared to the oceans which he does not know or understand. 'System' implies that human experience in all its richness and complexity can be compressed into a rigid psychological system and that human beings are like giant switchboards with just so many circuits. With this very limited view, the Discourses of the Buddha do not agree—such is a falsification of the Teaching.

is the answer and determined energy to go with it. The patient meditator really get results of lasting value, the seeker after 'quick methods' or 'sudden enlightenment' is doomed by his own attitude to long disappointment.

Contentment\* is also a star in the constellation of skillful qualities. This exists on many levels, from animal up to that of Perfect Enlightenment. We are concerned not with the lowest, but the Buddhist type of contentment. With enough of the necessities of life, one's mind will only be distracted if many desires crowd in as well. More and more things possessed actually do not satisfy, they are a cause for further dissatisfaction. With many things one has to have many more things, and more, and more . . . . . this is the opposite of contentment, but this must not be thought of as an excuse for laziness which all the Buddha's Teachings condemn. The simple life, on the other hand, is not lived happily merely by being frugally economic, it comes of an inward peace, of thought not outward straying after this or that thing, but contented to stay at home in the heart. It does not thereby preclude dynamic spiritual growth which is truly much easier with contentment than without it.

Usually one is grateful to someone for something. But this is not perfect Buddhist gratitude\* which comes after much meditation upon the Teaching of No-self. When this has been successfully accomplished one's idea of self has been uprooted and even other beings are seen to exist only provisionally. With such a perception, the events which happen, whether a worldling would call them good or otherwise, are all seen to have some fortune attached to them. The sage who perceives thus is just grateful, not to anyone and not necessarily for things received. He is just able to utilize the good in all things, not being attached any longer to his own continuity but intent upon the well-being of others.

Finally, humility\* should be mentioned here. This quality cannot be simulated. To pretend or even to believe that one is humble is merely false humility, otherwise pride dressed up differently. Humility is not a quality by which the world sets very much store, especially these days. The 'successful' man is apparently the one who goes out and wrests his fortune from the world and then exhibits his might for all to see. But Buddhist eyes may look further than this little life and in a longer perspective it will appear that humility is indeed the winner. Success in worldly matters is fleeting (though worthwhile when devoted to others' benefit), whereas coming to understand oneself has an incalculably greater effect. Humility is necessary, for instance, in approaching a religious tradition so venerable as the Buddhist one. Before one starts condemning this or that, pause a moment, does one understand everything connected with those matters? Perhaps, after all, it is one's own mind which is at fault? It is needed again if one goes to a teacher to learn, say, meditation from him. No humility means the presence of pride, and this leads to egocentric rigidity and where this is present, there is no hope of learning for which flexibility is required. Last but not least, humility is needed when presenting one's own opinions or ideas, they may be good, but if they relate to spiritual world, one must always remember that they stem from a mind still imperfect.

For further details on meditation there are many books to consult, some of them good, and in Siam there is the living tradition which may also be contacted if one is that much interested. Beyond urging a greater interest in the Practice of Meditation which is so clearly expounded in Buddhism and where the tradition is so strong, the writer can do no more. If the section on Practice has been considerably shorter than that on Belief, this is not because the latter is more prominent than the former. A good deal more lore on Buddhist Practice will be found in the next section on Realization. It is the belief of the writer that practices can only be known by

practising, that in fact, the best way to know what water is like is not got at through words. One will find out much better by splashing about in it. Buddhist practices are innumerable but all aim at Enlightenment: if one wants the latter, one must have sufficient interest to do the former. Even though ten thousand books ten times this size might hold all the practical details, what would be the use of them without the accompanying practice?

The three sections which have now been considered, Mundane Wisdom, Morality and Meditation are factors which, differently stressed, are to be found in all the major religions. The real point of difference in Lord Buddha's Teachings is the possession of a very fully developed Wisdom tradition which begins to unfold in stage one, opens with the practice of meditation and comes to complete unfoldment in the succeeding section.

The Wisdom which knows supernaturally the deepest-hid knowledge, the Wisdom which frees one from all bonds, the Wisdom of Crossing over the river of birth-and-death, the Wisdom of the Void, the Wisdom of the Deathless—such Transcendental Wisdom cannot be placed in the Path of Practice and must be held over to its rightful place in the Path of Realization.

### PART III.

#### WHAT DO BUDDHISTS REALIZE?

As a result of practice, what was at first believed deferring out respect to the Wisdom of the Buddha and His Teaching, is finally realized to be true, one has then come to be "one who knows"\* and is then beyond mere belief. We are therefore, now dealing with:

## 4. Transcendental Wisdom

### THE WORLDLING AND THE NOBLE ONE

‘Knowing’ means having an insight into the nature of reality such as most people do not have. It is a glimpse of the goal ahead, of Nirvāna, and those who see it have radical alterations brought about in their ways of thought and action. The worldling has already been mentioned and he is without such Insight, an ordinary uninstructed person who believes naively, that the world is just as it appears to be. He drifts along through life variously swayed by hopes and ambitions which are usually coloured with Greed, Hatred and Delusion. In this wandering course, he has no definite intent although he is quite often bound by a steel bond of waking, travelling, working, relaxation and sleeping. He seldom considers if life could be better employed or whether there might not be higher objectives than this round. His religion satisfies several of his desires: it accords with convention, it is the tradition of his family, it calls him to church (etc.) occasionally, but does not ‘poke its nose’ into his other affairs, it carries out the ceremonies required of it and gives him a little prop of consolation occasionally—and that is about all it is needed for. As contrasted with this sombre picture, the Noble One who has such Insight is the true saint. He is no sour ascetic, for Hatred which produces sourness has been either uprooted altogether or at least weakened, according, to the strength of the Insight, and same applies to Greed and Delusion. The Noble Ones are truly much more balanced than the floundering worldlings, and in the case of the highest Insight (after which they are called the Accomplished Ones\*), they are rid of even the slightest trace of the Three Roots of Unskill and hence also of all mental diseases stemming from these. Lord Buddha was also called an Accomplished One, accomplished because His speech perfectly accorded with His actions and behind both lay Enlightenment, brilliant in Wisdom and tender in Compassion. To become one who is truly Accomplished, is therefore to become as Lord Buddha. The Accomplished Ones far from being enmeshed in a wearying self-devoted

round, give their lives to the good of others, for what they have won, freedom from the Unskillful Roots and therefore real happiness, other may also gain. They experience no mental distress and even bodily pain is viewed differently as the Accomplished Ones are not attached to any sorts of bodies. Theirs is life not narrowly centred about selfish aims or family schemes but unrestrictedly concerned for everyone's well-being. Nor are Noble Ones 'saints' occasionally, for their transcendent experience of Nirvāna imbues all their thought, speech and action with Nobility; their thought is never sullied by unskill but always directed towards skillful or transcendental aims, their speech is mild, pleasing to the ear, giving wisdom and showing the Way, and their actions are not violent or harm-producing, indeed they impress all those who behold them by their grace and care.

Finally, those Accomplished among this spiritual nobility, do not have any perception of a self or being about which their world revolves (as in the case of the worldlings), nor do they see in things any abiding essence. Unobstructed by such deluded perceptions, they understand that Voidness interpenetrates all things. Where this is realized, there is no dichotomy of reality into subject and object but it is seen just as it is.

#### **LIMITATION OF WORDS**

The above paragraph, if it is intelligible at all, illustrates the weaknesses of language when it is pressed into the service of something for which it was never intended and has no words to describe anyway. Anyone reading Lord Buddha's Discourses will notice that much is said of this world, not only because it is useful for worldlings but because the words are here to describe it. Less is said of the heavens of Sense-desire although the superlatives of adjectives describing earthly delights will do. The Realms of Form are only described, if indeed this is the right word for such brief formulae, by a few sentences relating what mental-emotional factors are present at the levels of meditative absorption corresponding to them. Words are already insufficient! Reaching the Formless Realms,

words are useless since they usually describe concepts and their relations — which these realms are far beyond, each one is therefore only labelled with a single Pāli word. This is all the world of birth-and-death, and all of it may to some extent be named, conceptualized and reasoned about. The Noble Ones and particularly those Accomplished, have so to speak, jumped off this whirling roundabout, jumped onto Nirvāna, or the Deathless. In 'describing' this, words are only useful, if used with great care.

It is a feature of the worldling that he uses words carelessly for he believes that the things described by them are real entities which exist permanently. It would be truer to say that 'words use the worldling' rather than the reverse. The deluded mind has formed words and put them together as language, the deluded mind then uses them mistaking the changing and impermanent events of certain continuities (the substance of a table is all the time changing but it remains a table) for permanent realities. Language and lack of insight (the presence of Delusion) camouflage the real world and condition us to see it through a haze of misconceptions.

### **RELATIVE AND ULTIMATE TRUTH**

Buddhist psychology does not deny the *relative* validity of concepts about things, nor the *relative* existence of those things themselves. It does not deny that Mr. Smith or Mrs. Jones exist but it does point out that they only have continuity dependent on certain factors. Dependently they are born and dependently they die. The existence of dependently originated 'things' and their description by words are both 'true' — relatively true. Thus Buddhist thought points out Relative Truth\* and its whole purpose is to help people recognize this and then through Meditation and Insight ensure that they never again mistake it for reality. The Buddhas use words and concepts, and therefore Relative Truth, but are not confused thereby; whereas worldlings as we have said, let the words turn them round.

Ultimate Truth\* is the direct seeing of Nirvāna. It is the Truth of the Void which is everywhere and yet nowhere. It is the Truth which comes with Liberation from all unskillful bondages. It is not bound up with the processes of conceptual thought but has gone completely beyond them. It is not related to anything and therefore strictly, Indescribable. The Buddha and the Teachers of His tradition, have been careful not to overload any word standing for Ultimate Truth with too many concepts, for the Truth so represented then becomes subject to conceptualization and thus to misunderstanding. Buddhist tradition has even abandoned time-honoured labels for this Truth when they become conceptually coloured; such may be good for scholars and systematizers but will prove a hindrance to those who want to *practise*, and it is with them that the mainstream of the Teaching is concerned. This Ultimate Truth is often described by negative words, as with these the mind has less chance of formulating and grasping hold of concepts.

## NIRVĀNA

For instance, Nirvāna ( which can be derived in a number of ways) is such a term: *nir*, being a negative particle, and *vana* is variously interpreted. It can mean 'blowing out' as of a candle-flame being snuffed out<sup>(1)</sup> ( the end of the defilement's burning), or from *vana*=forest, chopping down the trees of ignorance and craving, or again, an end of weaving the cloth of birth-and-death: these are some of its explanations. It has also been explained by the famous simile of the Burning Fire. Lord Buddha asked an enquirer whether a fire would go on burning if dry sticks and grass were heaped upon it. The man replied in the affirmative. And what would happen to it

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(1) This explanation has misled some to suppose that Nirvāna is total extinction in spite of Lord Buddha's very explicit denials on this very subject. That which is beyond all words can scarcely be explained by the word 'annihilation' better than any other. It is ridiculous to suppose that Buddhism could have flourished and inspired men's minds during twenty-five centuries and in a host of countries, if it only had extinction as its goal!

if no fuel was given to that fire, was the Lord's next question. His enquirer said that it would undoubtedly go out. Just so is it in ordinary life where most people heap up the fire with sensual desires and so ensure continued existence in the realm of birth-and-death. The wise man ceases to feed the fire and it just dies away for want of fuel. Would it then be meaningful to ask in which direction those flames had gone? In answer, the man admitted it would not because the flames could only burn while the necessary conditions were present, in their absence the fire goes out. It is same with the accomplished sage, remarked the Buddha, it is not meaningful to ask where has he gone (when the body dies). This is what words cannot describe.

Nirvāna is also connected with 'becoming cool'. When the burning of desires in this fretful and feverish life, have been quenched, the mind is not agitated in any way. Unstrained, unburning, it enjoys tranquillity or coolness.

One other very important description of Nirvāna calls it the Other Shore. This bank of a river is seen to be dangerous with many things to arouse terror. Looking across the stream, the further bank is seen as secure, a place of beauty. The determined man gathers sticks and makes a raft which he then paddles across the river to other bank. Reaching it, he leaves the raft and goes on his way happily. This simile tells us much about both the goal Nirvāna, and about the Teaching. About the latter, we should note well the emphasis on the insecurity and unsatisfactory conditions to be found in the realm of birth-and death. Looking from where we are to what we suppose is Nirvāna, it is seen as refuge secure, free from all afflictions. Determination is necessary to set about doing something and then sustained energy is needed in order to cross over the river – the river of constant becoming. The raft on which one goes is the Teaching, and as the raft has to be bound together well, so the Teaching must be well understood. Also it is necessary in crossing a river, to proceed in the correct

direction and not to drift along, meaning that Right View\* is needed to show one which way to go for this will prevent one drifting off-course due to currents of wordly attachment; dislike etc. Once the Other Shore is reached, the Teaching is known in one's own heart and one has with the directions of Lord Buddha, discovered it for oneself. The raft which had been so invaluable in crossing-over can now be dispensed with for then it is not the Enlightenment of Gotama the Buddha which one knows only at second-hand through His recorded words, but one's own attainment. Such a sage then goes on his Way rejoicing not being attached even to the Teaching. Even to Nirvāna, the sage is not attached. He has overcome completely all intellectual problems regarding this Nirvāna or Enlightenment, which sometimes blocks the vision of the worldling.

The last way in which Nirvāna may be characterized is as the Unconditioned and Uncompounded. The events in the world of birth-and-death are, as we noted above, conditioned by certain factors; moreover, they are compounded, that is, made up of bits and pieces subject to whose presence they arise and in the absence of which, they either do not arise or else decline from existence. Nirvāna stands contrasted with such evanescent and patchwork phenomena—it is not conditioned and so neither arises, nor exists due to conditions, nor passes away; nor is it in any way compounded of other things. This is a good example of the 'negative-descriptive' way of talking about Nirvāna. The reader, exasperated by such strings of negations, may very well exclaim, 'Well, what is it then?' The writer knows only one way of telling him: to do the practice and find out for himself.

But to be fair, it is also called the Highest Happiness, a Refuge Secure, and labelled with many other names which poetically evoke a response in the heart, where concepts must necessarily fail.

Having touched upon the heights of Nirvāna and having tried to say what it is both by using positive and negative descriptions, it is now necessary to remove some misunderstandings about Nirvāna by saying quite definitely what it is *not*. It is unfortunate that this has to be done, but ignorance and craving get in the way and prevent true understanding of Nirvāna arising within one. This is the case now and has always been so and Lord Buddha had to contend with many such misunderstandings<sup>(1)</sup> while He was teaching, for the trouble with many people was that they preferred to conceptualize and argue *about* Nirvāna, rather than attain it, (this unfortunate tendency is still with humanity). Notably, people have tended to conceive of the absolute goal of religion in two ways. Most religious movements in the world have thought of the Absolute in terms of Absolute Existence and of the person who passes into knowledge of (or dwelling with) that Absolute as then enjoying everlasting existence (as either fusing with the Absolute,<sup>(2)</sup> living in company with it or him, or else some stage of partial dualism). This is the extreme view of *Eternalism*. Much trouble has come about because people did not realize that their puny words which are fit for farming,

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(1) One which might find a place here is the idea that Nirvāna can somehow be equated with a Personal Creator God. This is done by whittling the attributes off God and saying that they are theological accretions, and then comparing the remaining and rather mutilated God with Nirvāna. Nirvāna has nothing personal about it, nor is it impersonal, it just is. Nor is the Buddhist Teaching on the Absolute in any way connected with Creation; this and dissolution go on all the time and have never been confined to some remote time in the past. Lastly, Nirvāna is not worshipped or prayed to, it is to be attained by everyone who has the determination to do so.

(2) Although Sir Edwin Arnold's "the dewdrop slips in to the Shining Sea," is a good poetic picture, it is not very good Buddhism. No dewdrop (a soul — entity) is there to slip into the Sea (be joined with the Absolute). This amounts to equating Nirvāna with an impersonal Principle of some sort and this again Buddhist tradition guards against by emphasizing that even Nirvāna is devoid of any abiding entity (*sabbe dhammā anattā*). God, whether in personal or impersonal dress, cannot by the very nature of the Teaching, find any place in it.

fighting and even for philosophy, will not do when one begins dealing with the Absolute. Speculation, as Lord Buddha proclaimed so clearly, is useless. Either you *know*, or you do not. No amount of wrangling on theological subtleties will settle the matter.

He was particularly concerned that people should not fall into the extreme belief of supposing that one who had gained Nirvāna during life, would after death, continue to exist 'in Nirvāna'. What was the danger that He saw in this? Such a doctrine supposes a self or soul which continues 'in Nirvāna'. A self or soul is thought of as being possessed by a person, or as being his real 'self'. What ever is *possessed*, even such a subtle thing as a soul or self, will actually prove a hindrance to attaining Nirvāna. It is stressed in Buddhist scriptures that even Nirvāna is without a 'soul-self' and this precludes both: the attainment of it by anyone who still craves for and clings to any idea of 'soul-self'; as well as ruling out any thought of Nirvāna as a sort of 'overself', 'cosmic self' etc., etc. So, if one would realize Nirvāna which is no-self, one must realize 'one-self' as no-self. All ideas of eternalism, if analyzed, will be found to be only theories of a 'subtle-me-going-on', in other words, one has not completely renounced theories and by way of them hangs onto an 'I-concept'.

A few teachings, religious and materialist, have presented the opposite extreme view—that of *Annihilationism*—for people's belief. Very broadly speaking, it proclaims that their world is begun at birth and ended at death. They suppose that this is the only life and stress particularly that here and now is the only time to get things done. Now, while in one way this is admirable as it ensures that vital matters are not postponed, it is usually linked to a mechanistic theory of human behaviour and usually also to pure materialism. Its great drawback is that it fails to inspire people for long. It is noticeable that movements of this sort (some contemporary with the Buddha and the ancient Indian Carvakas) do not last for long. They

fail to satisfy man's spiritual cravings and after some time he will look for other and more truly religious ideals. That this will happen too with Communism, the latest materialist pseudo-religion, one cannot doubt. Eternalist views, on the other hand, actually pander to man's craving for himself to go on and on, and as they do this, so they find ready support and flourish apace. Buddhism while regarding the latter as a less pernicious view than the former, gives no encouragement to it and would have its true adherents by their *practice* of its Teachings, give up all views whatsoever. The Annihilation-view besides failing to inspire, may sometimes uphold the man who hedonistically enjoys today's pleasures while shrugging his shoulders about the morrow. As theistic religions picture a Judgement delivered by God sometime after death, so this view, being in revolt against the God-dominated universe, may declare that no retribution at all exists. One may do as one pleases, enjoy oneself now, there is nothing after life. If restraint is removed in this way, by this extreme view, then Buddhist Teaching criticizes it severely as leading to the downfall of those who follow it. Very definitely Lord Buddha declared that those who said that he taught a doctrine of annihilation were not reporting Him correctly. He only agreed that He taught the annihilation of Greed, Hatred and Delusion.

As to 'the person who enters Nirvāna' and what happens to him, we have seen already that 'person' is only conventional truth, one should really speak of 'a continuity of void processes'. Abandoning all one's views, one arrives after Insight, to realize in the heart that this is the truth. Ultimately speaking: No one enters Nirvāna, because there is no one to do so, no 'thing' to enter, and entry therefore impossible. Words have failed again. An ancient verse says:

“Nirvāna is, but not the man that enters it; The path is, but no traveller on it is seen”.

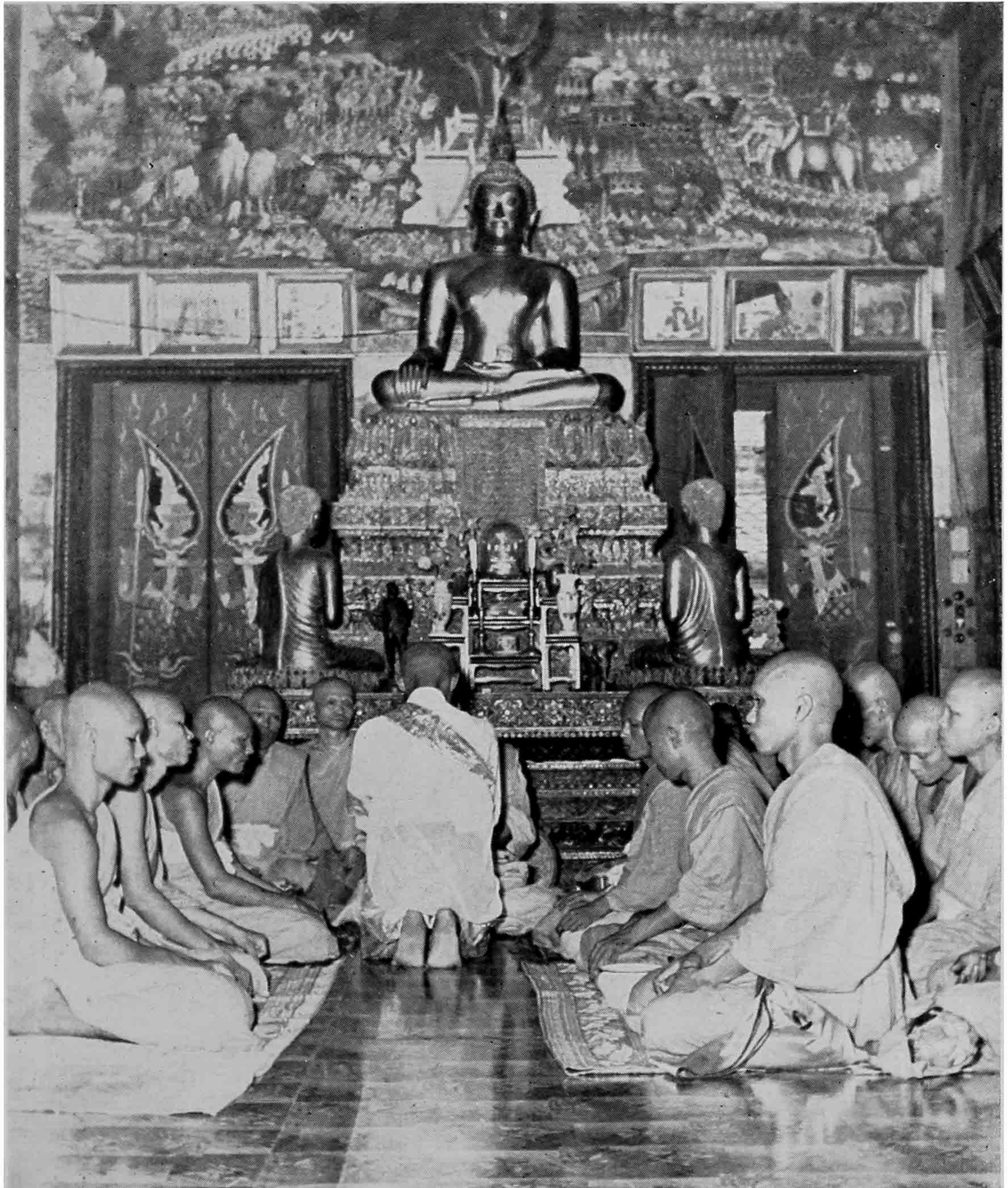
(*Visuddhi – Magga XVI*).

It should hardly be necessary now to stress that Nirvāna is not a place, sphere or realm of existence. The naive or uneducated may think of it in this way but there is little support for this. It is thus not to be equated with 'going to heaven' as the heaven-states are very definitely places, not above us somewhere up in the sky but above in a spiritual sense. Nirvāna, in fact, lies outside of space-time: it is in no place and therefore not to be pointed out by direction and it is timeless as it never began, (beginnings, even of religions, only indicate a compounded nature), it will never cease, (only that which has arisen can cease), and even to speak of its 'existence' brings one a step too close the Eternalist camp. Nirvāna, is of course, just to be *known*!

Many sages of the Buddhist tradition have time and again pointed out to people who were looking for Nirvāna 'outside' and perhaps in the future, that it was nowhere but here and now. Lord Buddha himself once instructed a disciple that the Truth was to be found, not by going to the ends of the world, but within this six-foot body. It is our wrong processes of thought which prevent us from seeing it in the present moment: our delusion of a person, 'myself', obstructs the view. We are told in many a poetic declaration of gnosis, how much more wonderful the world is, once that obstruction has gone. Many a disciple has exclaimed at the moment of his Enlightenment, how simple and yet how profoundly marvellous is the change which has now come about. It is evidently rather like a person who has spent all his life so far viewing the world in a distorting mirror—and then looks at it directly for the first time; or it is sometimes compared to a man who wakes up from a peculiar world of dreams, he then realizes the perverted nature of them, and the clarity of his waking consciousness. For the worldling therefore, the birth-and-death world and the ideal, Nirvāna must seem very far apart: the sage (as a Buddha or Accomplished One) sees things differently and for him they are not different, the first depending on the presence of the Unskilled Roots, Perversions etc., and the other upon unobstructed Insight.

## THE BUDDHA AS THE BUDDHIST IDEAL

It will be obvious now that Buddhists have for the ideal of their daily life, the perfect example of Lord Buddha's conduct, and for inward realization they have the Perfection of Wisdom which is the essence of Enlightenment. They are urged by the scriptures to aim at becoming a Worthy One and this epithet is also used for Lord Buddha. Clearly effort should be directed to achieve what He achieved. Before a start can be made on such a tremendous task, a degree of progress on the Way is certainly necessary. Without excellent morality and deep concentration even the best of Buddhists can hardly hope to set out upon the attainment of Buddhahood. For this, he has first to practise the ordinary path so far set out and so by the power of his practice, be able to approach the beginning of the Buddha-Way. That he cannot so easily gain access to this incomparable Path of Wisdom, may be seen from some of the things required of him: to have penetrated to the Truth of Suffering and so have excellent renunciation; to have seen with Insight the Truth in the Teaching of No-self and so dispelled ideas of 'I' and 'mine'; and to have a Compassion which, quite regardless of self because of the former realization, is determined to set out for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings—in such aspiration even spiritual selfishness is vanquished, that is, the desire to save one's own continuity while letting others find their own way. As a result of such altruistic attainment a Wisdom-being frees himself sufficiently from craving so that the Wheel of Birth-and-Death is no longer able to whirl him round. He is, unlike worldings, able to select the realm into which he wishes to be born, even the place and the parents are chosen by him at will. Thus he is free to accomplish his great task in the most spiritually profitable manner.



Lower ordination — a layman asking to join the Order of monks.

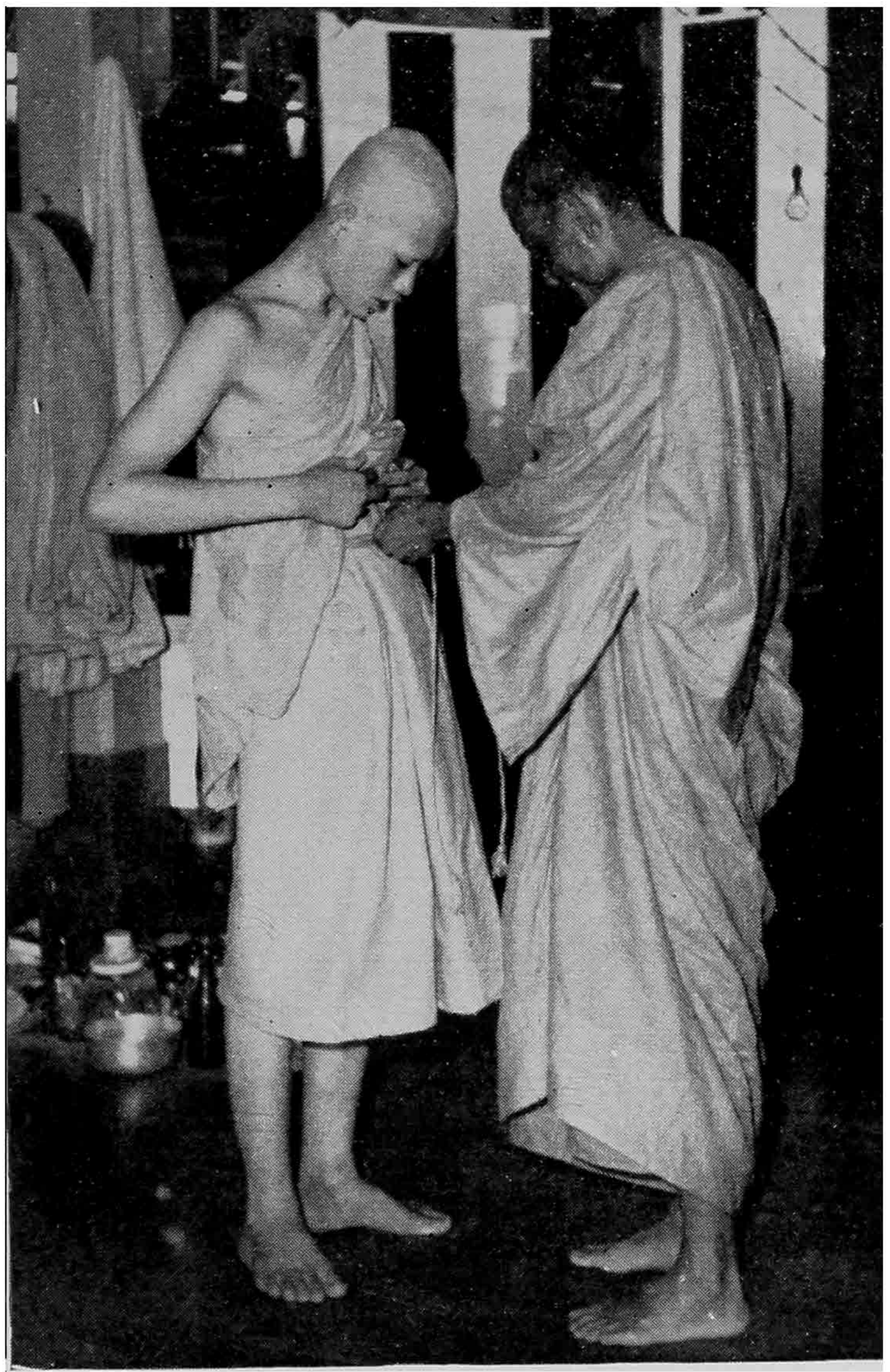


Higher ordination — a novice is accepted as a member of the Order.

Studying Pali



A senior monk helping a young novice to put on his robes.



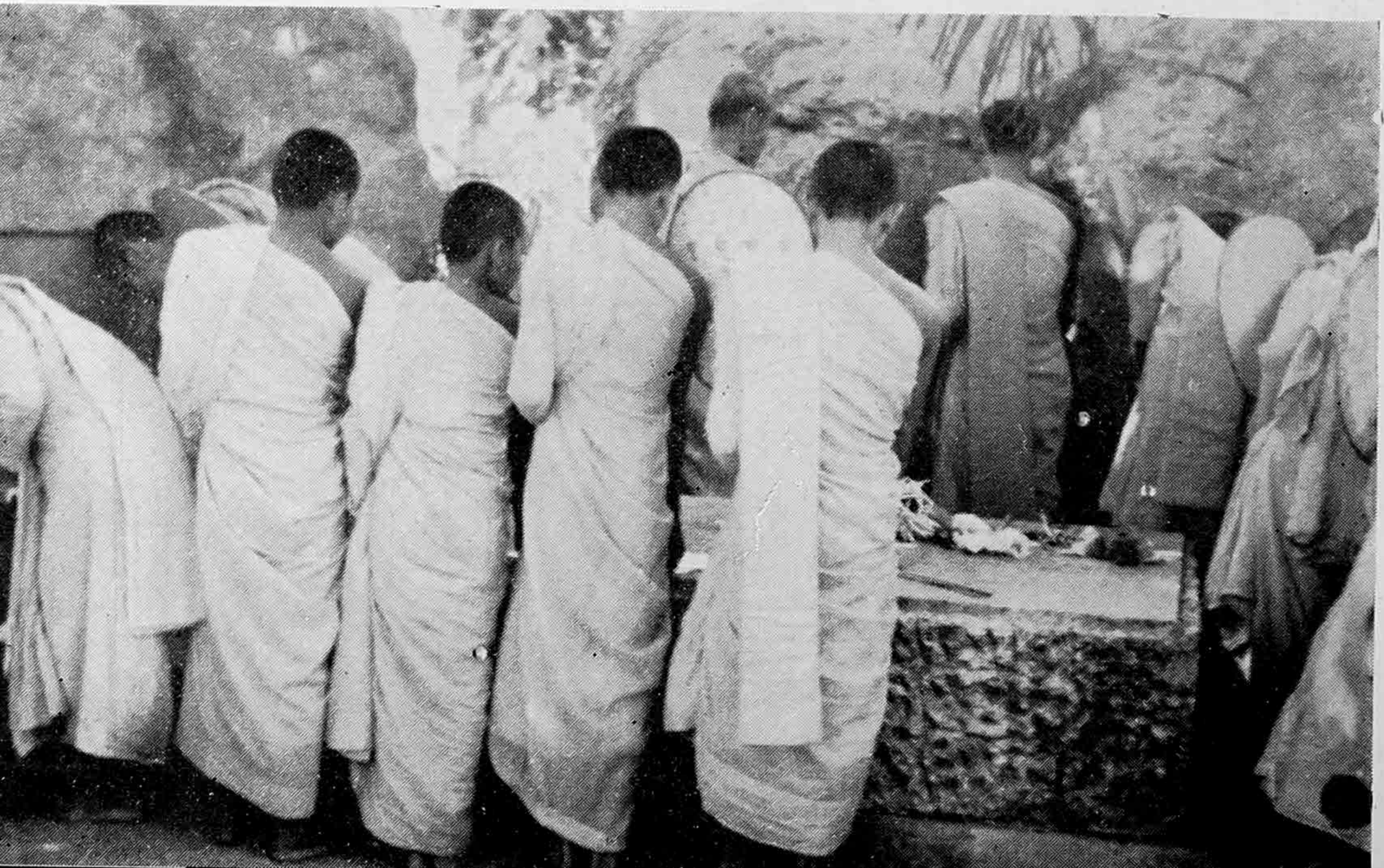
Studying Pali





Begging for forgiveness from each other.

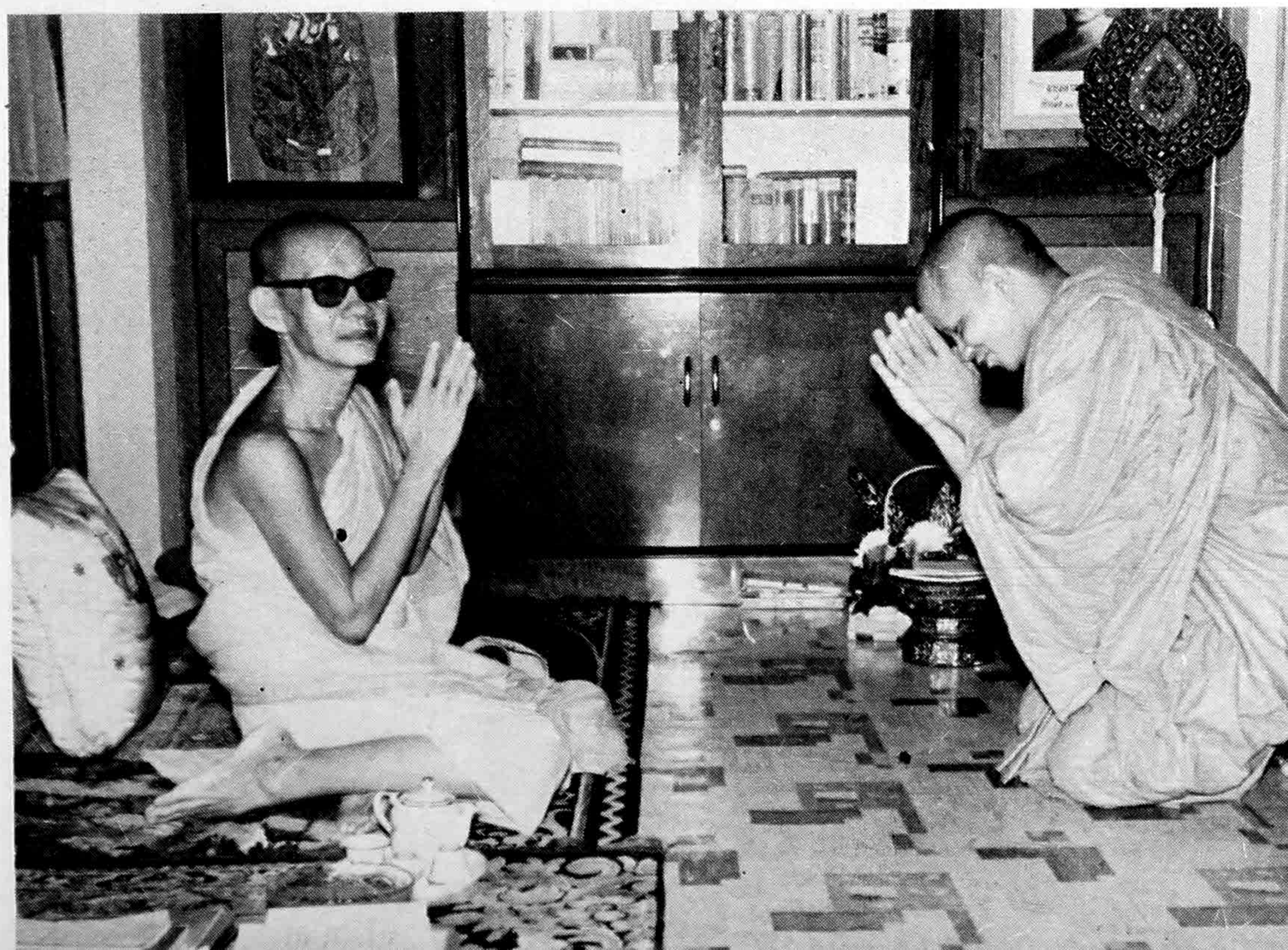
Meditating on corpses.





Preaching a sermon.

A junior monk paying respects to his superior.





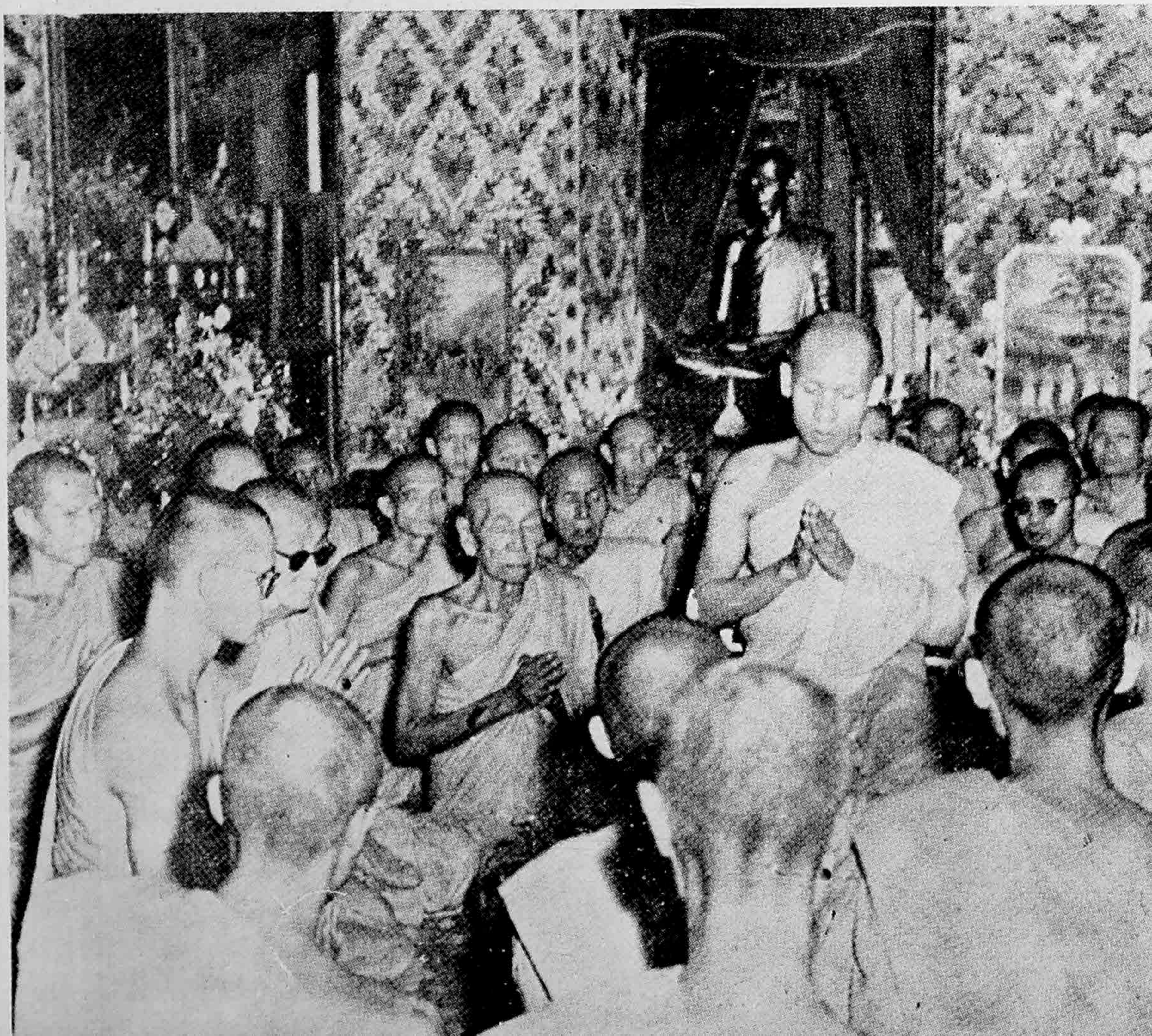
Collecting alms daily from the faithful.





An annual ceremony of presenting robes to a monk

Fortnightly recitation of the Rules





Wandering monks without any fixed abode.

Monks' lodging in a wat.



## THE TEN PERFECTIONS

With such a resolve and so spiritually matured, he must then consider how he is to accomplish his task. Buddhist tradition lists ten qualities to be perfected for one aspiring to be a Wisdom-being on the Way to Buddhahood. As there are two lists of these Perfections\* one in Pāli and the other in Sanskrit,\* the writer noting that good qualities are to be found in the former and lacking in the latter, while in the latter the sequence of Perfections is better, presents here a combined list in which most of the factors are, in any case, common to both.

It will be apparent that many of these qualities may be cultivated by the ordinary person. For instance, a worldling may give alms—then in what way does he differ from a Wisdom-being? The latter in giving observes the Three Spheres of Purity\*: he does not perceive a person called ‘the giver’, nor another to whom anything is given, and in the act of giving also there is no self siezed upon. Voidness is clearly seen in all these three spheres. In terms of grammar, the subject, the object and the verb do not delude him into thinking in the way of ‘self’ and ‘other’. This threefold voidness is applied to all the Perfections, whichever one is being cultivated, and actions are not technically Perfections unless they are so accompanied by perception of the Void. Without it they are merely merits aiding one to attain heaven-states, but when knowledge of the Void is present, they are Transcendental Merits aiding the Wisdom-being towards Buddhahood. It is accordingly stressed in the enormous Perfection of Wisdom Discourses, that there are no true Perfections unless the Perfection of Wisdom is present.

The somewhat rarified realm about which this book has now to say something if it is to be complete, are the subject in the scriptures devoted to them, of an abundance of paradox. An ordinary ‘commonsense’ man if he had the patience to read

them at all would almost certainly label them, 'nonsense' ('commonsense', valuable in worldly matters, is we must remember, distorted by Greed, Hate and Delusion, and thus of less value when dealing with the Perfection of Wisdom). His inability to understand might be excused for as we approach the edges of the realm of birth-and-death and begin to cross over to the Transcendental, so words used in the ordinary ways cease to have meaning but what in this case, is nonsense to the uninstructed worldling, contains a vast reservoir of Wisdom-teachings for the potential Wisdom-being. As this book is but an outline of Buddhist Teaching, much of the paradox and consequently much of the Wisdom has had to be left out or left unexplained and therefore the profundity of this Teaching has been severely curtailed. Only a study of the original scriptures of this, and those of other schools of Buddhism, can give one a really accurate and balanced account of what Lord Buddha has taught.

After these preliminary explanations, a brief account of the Ten Perfections follows below.

In order to make them and their sequence and connections clear, they are first listed and after that explained.

#### THE PERFECTIONS OF :

<i>Preliminaries</i>	{	<i>Renunciation</i>
	{	<i>Vowing</i>
<i>The Basis</i>	{	<i>Giving</i>
	{	<i>Morality</i>
<i>Additional</i>	{	<i>Patience</i>
<i>Qualities</i>	{	<i>Energy</i>
		<i>Meditation</i>
<i>With All</i>	{	<i>Wisdom</i>
<i>Perfections</i>	{	<i>Skillful Means</i>
		<i>Truth</i>

## **The Perfection of Renunciation**

The Wisdom-being has to be able to relinquish *everything*. This is the great lesson taught by the Birth-Story of Prince Vessantara. The less one is able to renounce, the less one is able to practise, and less practice means delayed realization. The more one is able to give up, the deeper will be one's understanding and practice, and consequently the more thorough and speedy will be realization. There is a misunderstanding about renunciation which seems to be widespread. It is said that the people of the East are more easily able to renounce things as they have fewer of them (than Westerners). But ability in renunciation does not depend on geography or on things but upon the mind. Lord Buddha pointed out that a man may live in a mud hut, lead a miserable life, have an ugly wife and no money to keep going, and even if he sees monks, even Accomplished Ones, it does not stir his mind to become like them and he clings to his misery. Another man is the son of a wealthy family, has much money, he can have whatever he wants, he is surrounded by beautiful companions and yet seeing those who have renounced all he is inspired to follow their example and become one of them. Peoples having a Buddhist culture are perhaps able to renounce more easily as they have before them the stories told of the lives of the Wisdom-being who became Gotama the Buddha and also His own example.

Of course, renunciation of the household life may be accompanied as it so obviously was in the case of Gotama, by renunciation of attachments, or it may not. By the Perfection of Renunciation, not only leaving the household life is meant, some Buddhist teachers indeed stress that a dedicated household life is also possible for a Wisdom-being, (though much more difficult than a monk's existence). What is meant by this Perfection is completeness of inward renunciation and although outward renunciation may not be accompanied by an inward one, to find the latter without the former is most unusual.

Besides the mere renunciation of material things with which we are not so much concerned, what is the Wisdom-being to renounce? He has to show that he is ready in life after life to give up that which is most difficult: the parts of his body if they can benefit others, and his very life itself to save others' lives or to make them happy. No empty renunciation is this, no token or symbolic renunciation but an actual practice guided by Wisdom and inspired by Compassion.

To renounce is excellent but it must be accompanied by a more positive idea of what is to be done. Hence the connection with the succeeding factor:

### **The Perfection of Vowing**

Enlightenment is certainly unitary although it may be developed with different mental attitudes. The Wisdom-being has early to select the particular aims that he wishes to accomplish and then to devote all his merits to their fruition which will come about when he attains Perfect Enlightenment. Provided that his Vows are in accordance with the True Nature of reality as expressed in the Awakened One's Teachings, he may choose whatever tasks seem to him most necessary. Thus, although the Enlightenment experienced by the different Buddhas down the ages, is the same, and although their Teaching is basically the same, their character and method of Teaching may be different, depending on the special Vows that they made as Wisdom-beings and then practised through countless lives until Buddhahood was won.

The Wisdom-being in training may preserve in his mind a stanza like the following:

“I take Refuge – till Enlightenment is won,  
In the Buddha, the Teaching and in the Noble Order:  
Fulfilling all Perfections, Giving first,  
Oh, for the world's weal, may I Buddhahood attain.”

Increasing the strength of this Perfection, he is able to maintain a mind set on the Five Ordinary Vows:

“Though sentient beings are without number,  
I vow to save them all.

Though Unskillful Roots are endless,  
I vow to cut them off.

Though the Methods of the Teachings are numberless,  
I vow to learn them all.

Though Supreme Wisdom is boundless,  
I vow to traverse it.

Though Buddhas are infinite in number,  
I vow to worship them all.”

Beyond these come the individual Wisdom-being's Special Vows and as these vary greatly, they cannot be discussed here.

With these two Perfections, the Wisdom-being has made a start for they are the Preliminaries to his long career. The actual basis is made with the next two Perfections, the first of which is:

### **The Perfection of Giving**

This is often listed as the first Perfection, as it is thought that if one cannot give without reservation, one's mind is not truly that of a Wisdom-being. However, in this list the aspect of *giving up* has been accorded first place so that here it is not giving as it affects the giver which is important here, but giving for the happiness of the receiver.

Obviously the second kind of giving is not possible without the first. Initially there is the will to relinquish and this opens the heart so that the Wisdom-being desires to give gifts.

What does he give? Guided by Wisdom, which of course would guard against the giving of gifts that might cause harm,

the Wisdom-being gives instantly, everything, to everybody who asks. There are again Birth Stories which illustrate this Perfection excellently. If the Wisdom-being is rich then he is in the position to fulfill the desires of many beings. (Many Buddhist monarchs have emulated this practice not always to the delight of their treasury officials, but no doubt to the benefit of their own mental states and the good of many others). If, on the other hand, he is poor, he may still give great gifts: the gift of loving-kindness, inspiring confidence and trust in others which is for them the gift of fearlessness, and whatever small thing he has – he gives it, with rejoicing.

Other things to be given are education and merits. As pointed out in our reference to monastery schools, an educated mind is required to grasp the fundamental theories of Buddhist practice. The Wisdom-being, in his great effort for the Enlightenment of all, realizes that education is invaluable towards this end. He gives it so that beings may acquire at least mundane wisdom.

Merits are given away by a process known as the Transference of Merits. Already touched upon in the rebirth section, it has here a deeper significance. Only the deluded think of merits as 'belonging to them', as though they were a sort of spiritual furniture designed to give only oneself comfort. Infinitely more meritorious are those acts which having been accompanied by Wisdom, are pure in the three respects; then of course, it is perceived that there is no one anyway who can hoard merits. With a mind dwelling on the Void and radiant with Compassion, the Wisdom-being transfers all his merits to others, for their happiness and welfare.

Most important is the gift of the Teaching which excels all other gifts. Why? Because it is based on the True Nature\* of reality and shows all beings how they may so order their lives that instead of them being twisted by perverted thought, they become established upon the same sure foundation.

Through practice of the Teaching, beings may become happy by the attainment of their varying aims. Those who wish to be born again among men, for them the Way is shown by this Teaching; likewise for those who would prefer to go to a heavenly state; and those determined ones who would become 'Ones-who-Know', a clear Way is indicated for them as well. The Wisdom-being delights most in this last kind of Giving – the Giving of the Teaching particularly when this is concerned with the Liberation of other beings from the round of rebirth and their attainment of final Nirvāna.

### **The Perfection of Morality**

This is the other half of the basis for the practice of the Perfections. Both lists agree in its importance for the purity and progress of the Wisdom-being. Whatever the discipline he has undertaken, he fails if he breaks any of its precepts. As a monk he will observe the 227 (or 250) precepts carefully though having regard to the purpose for which they have been framed, rather than the letter. As a householder, he will keep strictly to the Five or Eight Precepts, never transgressing them. Besides this aspect of breaking his moral code, there is another more positive one to consider. His Perfection of Morality is not pure if he fails to help other beings with acts which make *their* observance of the morality easy. If he thought only in terms of his own purity of morals, a Wisdom-being would be falling away from his task; he has to ensure that others are also advanced in the training of moral observance and thus he instructs them first by his own example and then by word of mouth.

For him, morality is not a species of repressive observance from which open the malodorous flowers of self-righteousness; quite the opposite, he uses his moral observance to root out any remaining fragment of the notion of a self. His morality is really selfless in the highest possible sense of the word, for

it should be remembered that the Wisdom-being performs the Perfections with the purity of the three spheres forever in mind.

Even at this advanced state, the Buddhist tradition declares quite unmistakably that Morality is a hallmark of true spiritual attainment and only very rarely will it appear to be otherwise (as when a sage uses the Perfection of Skillful Means q.v.). It is a very good way to judge those in this world who claim to be religious teachers, that is, to examine very carefully their moral observance. If their lapses of morality (the manifestations of Greed, Hate and Delusion), are said by such people either to be unimportant at their stage of spirituality, or that they are meant as tests for the faith of followers, one may know such 'teachers' to be either deluded by conceit or downright frauds.

If readers are interested to examine some of the English translations of Buddhist scriptures in which the Wisdom-being's path is fully charted, they cannot fail to be impressed by the unrelaxing uprightness which is expected of him. Backsliding in this Perfection would lead to the collapse of the whole of the Wisdom-being's career and for this reason it is stressed that he must be sure to perfect Morality.

The Wisdom-being has already quite a constellation of good qualities to his credit: Renunciation, His Vows, Giving and Morality, and he has now to go forward and develop two additional qualities which he will find quite invaluable upon his Way – Patience and Energy.

### **The Perfection of Patience**

It must soon become apparent to any enquirer of Buddhism, that these teachings are not for the impatient. A Buddhist views his present life as a little span perhaps of eighty years or so and the last one so far of many such lives. Bearing this in mind he determines to do as much in this life for the

attainment of Enlightenment as possible but he does not overestimate his capabilities and, mindful of the enormous heap of muck to be removed, patiently tackles this task. Thus in speaking of the ideal method to progress along the Way it can be said that in each life, after some preparatory self-explorations, a practitioner decides to aim at cutting down or removing this or that hindrance. Steadily working in this way, he does in fact make progress. Rushing headlong at Enlightenment (or what one thinks it is) like a bull in a china shop, is not likely to get one very far, unless one is a very exceptional character who can take such treatment and unless also, one is devoted to a very skillful master of meditation.

With Patience, one will not bruise oneself but go carefully step by step along the Way. The Wisdom-being is well aware of this and he cultures his mind with this Perfection so that it is not disturbed by any of the untoward occurrences common in the world. He decides that he will be patient with exterior conditions – not be upset when the sun is too hot or the weather too cold. Not be agitated by other beings which attack his body, such as bugs or mosquitoes. Neither will he be disturbed when people utter harsh words, lies or abuse about him, either to his face or behind his back. His patience is not even broken when his body is subjected to torment, blows, sticks and stones, tortures and even death itself he will endure steadily, so unflinching is his patience. It should not be thought from this that he would deliberately court a painful death – for martyrdom is far from being a Buddhist ideal. As a Wisdom-being and having no thought of self, he, by his Vows belongs nevertheless to all beings and his existences are devoted to their good. He does not therefore throw his life away easily but is mindful of the good he may accomplish, while his Perfections of Renunciation and Giving ensure that if there is an occasion for him to sacrifice his body, he will patiently do so, glad to be able to benefit others.

Patience perfected is certainly a great necessity for the Wisdom-being. Without it how could he persevere in carrying out even his ordinary Vows, let alone actually reach the Buddha-attainment? He has to have patience, not only in endurance, but in acceptance of doctrines the truth of which it is difficult at first to understand. He has patience too in learning and practising Teachings which he may have to acquire from many different teachers.

In Buddhist tradition, the Perfection of Patience is rather better known than some of the others. This is because a quite outstanding Birth Story illustrates it. The Khantivādī (Preacher of Patience) Birth Story should be read many times and made the object of deep and frequent reflections. Only an exceptionally noble person can gently exhort a raging monarch who out of his jealous anger is slowly cutting that person's body into pieces. Such nobility did the Wisdom-being have who we know in a later birth as Gotama the Buddha, and such nobility, steadfast endurance and gentleness, is required of all who would try to reach the goal of Buddhahood.

### **The Perfection of Energy**

Just as Enlightenment is inconceivable unless a person has patience, so it is not attainable without effort being made. Buddhism has never encouraged the doctrine of sitting quietly and passively letting what will be, happen. Such fatalism is combatted by mindfulness, which essential quality is also included here, and by energy itself. It is energy which is essential to the Wisdom-being who sets out fearlessly upon a great multitude of births and deaths out of Compassion for beings in the six Realms, knowing that he must rescue them all from these states before he wins his own Full Enlightenment.

This Perfection is the counterpart of the previous one. Practised in balance, they ensure that the Wisdom-being

neither passively accepts what he should combat, nor rushes around to the disturbance of himself and others when he should have patience.

Naturally, the Wisdom-being with much to do, has to perfect himself in this respect; he is not thinking only of his own Enlightenment but of the advancement in that direction of all sentient beings. This does not mean that he is flustered or indeed ever appears to be rushed, for who is to do the rushing, who is there for whom he should rush and what is hurry for him? Seeing as he does the Void in all these spheres, he is energetic but never upset. He applies himself steadily to whatever task he has in hand and coming to the end of it, does not feel tired at all but straightway takes up a new objective.

It is interesting in this respect that tiredness comes largely from conflicts in the mind-body and not half or even quarter of our resting and sleep would be required if conflicts were resolved. Then much more energy would be available to keep body and mind from feeling tired. This can actually be observed in many who have practised much meditation. They never seem to get tired and just go on and on while others slumber. The Wisdom-being with the task that he has undertaken cannot afford to spend a third or more of his life asleep.<sup>(1)</sup>

On the other hand he does not self-consciously make an effort but rather becomes a vehicle through which a stream of Transcendent Energy passes without any hindrance. Always energetic in his own practice, whichever of the Perfections concerns him, and always pursuing with energy the Enlightenment of all beings he does not in fact see either 'own practice'

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1. Despite all his grand and altruistic activity, some believe Buddhism to teach or result in, inactivity. The idea of rushing around doing things does not appeal to many Eastern peoples. This should not be mistaken for laziness but is generally a different way of looking at life (and one which does not fill the lunatic asylums or pack the hospitals with worry-complaints). To be active is encouraged, activity in every sphere where the skillful (what is 'good'), will be promoted.

or 'other beings' through dwelling upon the Perfection of Wisdom. Conversely without the present Perfection he can never reach Perfect Wisdom.

After perfecting his energy, sometimes called Vigour, he is next able to take up successfully:

### **The Perfection of Meditation**

The Perfections so far, have been the practice of either the monk or of the lay Wisdom-being. But Meditation, requires for its success a high degree of renunciation, in the sense-world and the distracting thoughts which they arouse but also for the actual objects themselves. It is therefore the custom in Buddhist lands that if a layman wishes to practise meditation for any period of time, he either becomes a monk (perhaps temporarily) or else goes to live in a solitary place suitable for meditation development and there practises diligently. To stay at home surrounded by familiar things and people and at the same time to expect to be able to meditate, is certainly not possible for most people. Even Wisdom-beings, if they are laymen, are instructed to give up sexual relations, to leave their homes and seek for quietness and the guidance of a Good-friend (meditation instructor). From these requirements, the importance of the Perfection of Renunciation is stressed.

The connection between Morality and Meditation is already well-known to readers and need not be mentioned again. Both of the two previous Perfections are important here. Patience is needed or the Wisdom-being will never enter Meditation, let alone perfect it, and Energy is necessary for without it instead of a concentrated absorption he will quietly go to sleep! As a stepping-stone to the next Perfection with which this third part of the book is particularly concerned, the practice of the Perfection of Meditation is quite invaluable.

What especially marks off the Wisdom-being's practice here from that of an ordinary meditator (in any religion), is that the latter will most likely become firmly attached to the delights of Sensual Realm meditations or the pure joys of the Realm of Form and as a result come to birth in one of the heaven-states. The Wisdom-being does not want to be trapped in this way—how will he be able to generate the energy to develop the Perfection of Wisdom if he is constantly distracted by heavenly delights? Therefore he cultivates a revulsion for the concentrated absorptions while at the same time becoming perfect in them. This implies that he can enter them when he likes, which one he likes, for as long as he likes and leave them when he likes. His practice is also marked off from the ordinary by being conjoined with a perception of the Void. Neither practicer, nor meditation-object, nor the practising is taken up by him.

This brings in one important point, mention of the Doors of Freedom\*. These are three in number and one of them is the Concentration\* which perceives the Void as mentioned above. However, they are usually mentioned in this order: the Wishless, the Signless and the Void. Perception of the first destroys the Unskillful Root of Greed. The second uproots Hatred, for this cannot flourish if one does not seize upon the unpleasant signs (or characteristics) of things. The third and deadly Root of Delusion is utterly destroyed by the concentration perceiving the Void. Thus the Wisdom-being advances his career towards its culmination in:

### **The Perfection of Wisdom**

The essence of Enlightenment whereby a Wisdom-being is transformed into a Buddha is now arrived at. It is that Supreme Wisdom which as the following quotation shows, Gotama hesitated to preach :—

“After labours long, by me Enlightenment is won.  
“Enough this is, why should I make it known?  
Consumed by lust and hate the many folk  
Will never understand this Teaching deep.  
Leading on against the worldly stream  
Difficult to see for it is subtle, delicate  
By slaves of passions it will not be seen  
Cloaked as they are in the murk of ignorance.”

Although Lord Buddha *did* teach out of His Great Compassion, there have never been many whose eyes are but little clouded by worldly dust.

Ultimately, this is the only Perfection. The other qualities are either necessary for practice towards Perfect Wisdom or corollary to it, and it has already been pointed out that for them to be Perfections at all, it must always accompany them.

Although in conventional speech, we may talk of ‘practising towards’ the Perfection of Wisdom, actually no other qualities are necessary to support it, it just is, and either one has it or one has not. Here again neither is there one who has it (persons are empty of self) or any way of having it (even the instant of ‘realization’ is likewise void). What is said below conventionally characterizes this Perfection, but ultimately it is not possible to say anything at all as no words exist or pattern of thought in which to interpret them, which will satisfactorily convey its true import.

In a famous collection of Lord Buddha’s aphoristic sayings, the Dhammapada, there are some particularly well-known lines which outline the Three Marks of Existence (see I). They are as follows:

- “All compounded things are impermanent,
- “All compounded things are unsatisfactory,
- “All events are without a self.” (verses 277–279).

As said in another collection of Buddhist scriptures: That which is impermanent is also unsatisfactory and in the changing there is no self to be found. *Realizing* these by one's practice, there arises the Perfection of Wisdom. Later teachers, anxious lest a 'self' should creep into the Teaching in disguise, taught the No-self of the individual person\* and the No-self of all events\*—even the momentary events\* into which phenomena might be analyzed for the purposes of meditation, even these lacked any ultimate essence and were by their nature, and like the individual, Void.

(QUESTION POINT: THESE EVENTS, THEIR NATURES AND COMBINATIONS, AND THE RELATION OF THIS TO MEDITATION AND WISDOM).

Conventionally speaking, the object of the Perfection of Wisdom is the Void.<sup>(1)</sup> Obviously a non-dual state cannot really have an object so that these two names are just descriptions of the same thing from different angles. Regarding the Perfection of Wisdom, there is no one who experiences it (in the ultimate sense, 'persons' do not exist), no Perfection of Wisdom, to be experienced, (because it is not a 'thing', not a concrete 'dhamma') and no act of experiencing (since experience is like a flowing river, having in reality no self-entity): this is the application of the Three Spheres of Purity here.

Naturally, it is impossible to attain it (*who* would be able to do this?) and this being so no time can be indicated when this could happen. Yet, from the Perfection of Wisdom all the Buddhas are born (see I) and conventionally speaking the Full Moon of Visākha (usually May) is pointed out as

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(1) This term, 'Void' has confounded many who suppose that by it a blank nothingness is meant. It is not nothing and not something. Intellectuals and scholars especially, who are so used to tying up things in neat packages with the reasoning mind, find it impossible to conceive of any other way of thinking. Only by Meditation and Wisdom can the usual thought-processes be superseded and Knowledge arise in other ways—then may *know* the Void.

the 'time' of Gotama's 'attainment'. The Perfection of Wisdom which is the Teaching in its Ultimate sense, is "Timeless"\* and cannot be pinned down upon a chart of merely human time. From existing outside of time, it should also be considered as having no content — what content indeed could the Void have? Yet, as against this, there is nowhere where the Void is not. And again, the literature which informs us of the nature of this Perfection and therefore is much concerned with the Void, is of staggering proportions. No doubt it is possible to say and write infinitely upon the subject of the Void and yet, when this is done, nothing at all has been said about it as it is truly to be experienced and not a matter for comment.

From the above, a peculiar thing may be noted about statements made in this realm. In talking about the Void it is possible to make two contradictory statements, both of which are 'true'. Logic is pushed to its furthest point in this field (and shown to be inadequate) defeating itself by its own contradictions. No statements are ultimately true about the Perfection of Wisdom — it is to be known.

A story relates that one seeker after the scriptures of the Perfection of Wisdom, was given many books, which upon being examined later, were found to consist only of blank leaves. When the seeker protested that people would never be satisfied with these the Wisdom-being who had presented them remarked with resignation, "Well, I have given you the real scriptures but as you do not understand them, I suppose you had better have some with words".

### **The Perfection of Skillful Means**

All the Perfections preceding Wisdom may be looked upon as Skillful Means, they are useful, indeed invaluable to get at what one is really aiming to achieve. Without their practice Perfect Wisdom cannot be got at. They are at once the Merits which the Wisdom-being must accumulate by

giving them away and so become worthy of Perfect Wisdom; and the expression of active Compassion as inseparable from Perfect Wisdom.

Before Enlightenment, Wisdom and Compassion flow along as two parallel streams in the Wisdom-being: after Enlightenment they are twin aspects of each other, the Compassion which has vowed to save all beings and the Wisdom which perceives no beings to save.

The Wisdom-being, now a Buddha, is possessed of infinite Skillful Means in order to bring beings to recognize the Way, to practise it and so come to Enlightenment—neglecting none, all are in His skillful hands justified and quite safe. However, extreme methods such as displays of supernormal powers are only used rarely and when it is certain that they will result in Enlightenment.

The whole life of a Buddha is in fact, one long Skillful Means in order to bring beings to Perfection—every word of instruction spoken has this purpose, and every bodily action during demonstrations of the Teaching is directed at beings' Enlightenment.

### **The Perfection of Truth**

In a conventional sense, the quality of truthfulness marks out a Wisdom-being from the very beginning of his career. By his Perfection of Renunciation, he has promised suffering beings that he will, for their sake fulfill the other Perfections and so attain Enlightenment. In the next Perfection, he has vowed to accomplish certain aims which will save beings from their woe. Similarly with all the other Perfections and a Wisdom-being does not deceive others, he does not break his promises.

After Enlightenment, as a Buddha, He never departs from the Ultimate Truth—even in conventional matters. The Ultimately True forever presents itself before Him as Nirvāna, the Unperverted.

The above Perfections may of course all be practised by those who, while they aspire to the goal of a Wisdom-being have not yet entered upon that exalted path. In that case they will be at most only mundane Perfections or the practice of very good qualities.

The process from worldling to Buddhahood traditionally takes slow aeons of lives in which the Wisdom-mind like a lotus bud, slowly develops and unfolds into the full-blown flower of Enlightenment.<sup>(1)</sup> There do exist however, certain methods for the accumulation of the necessary merits and the development of Wisdom even within a single life. Such attainment is only possible with the aid and guidance of an Enlightened teacher.

#### **QUALITIES OF THE BUDDHA-MIND.**

As a further help to understanding Enlightenment, three ways of illustrating the character of a Buddha, may be examined. Strictly speaking, it is impossible to examine the character of a Buddha as this is full of infinite potentialities which can never, all of them, be enumerated. Certain general features are outstanding however, and it is these which may help us here.

Buddhahood may be looked at either as the absence of certain qualities, or as the presence of others.

---

(1) There exists in Buddhism, an ancient dispute in which one side talks of 'sudden' Enlightenment, while the other declares that it is 'gradual'. Much of the arguments on both sides appear to be built upon misconceptions and there really seems to be no conflict. The preparation for Enlightenment may take long and in this, the process taking many lives to complete, is 'gradual'. On the other hand, the experience of Enlightenment itself, whether it takes place after 500 births dedicated to it, twenty years of toilsome meditation, or after only five minutes (and this depends jointly upon the preparedness of the individual's character and also upon his teacher), is bound to be 'sudden'. The leap from mundane states of mind to the Transcendental, whatever processes and methods lead up to it, is always, as leaps are always, sudden.

At all times, a Buddha's consciousness is devoid of the Three Roots of Unskill. These do not exist for Him and Great Compassion arises in Him as He sees other beings suffering from them: suffering from what are by their nature, delusory. He does not react to objects which would in an unenlightened mind stimulate these Roots and thus give rise to the defilements. Instead of these negative and egocentric emotions arising, a Buddha shows other and positive emotions which are not reactions since they are an inherent part of His nature.

Indeed, at all times and for all to see, there are Non-greed, Non-hatred and Non-delusion present\* In case these names also sound too negative, they may be translated into their positive counterparts: Contentment, Loving-kindness/Compassion, and Wisdom. If any account of Gotama the Buddha's life is read, examples of these Transcendent qualities may be seen. Contentment with little was one of the features of His own life and a virtue which he was always recommending to His monk-disciples. Being contented with little and wanting nothing save the Enlightenment of all beings, He was given everything needful by devoted lay-folk. Lord Buddha radiated Loving-kindness even when others insulted Him, and Compassion He had for them also, as He taught them however, so they behaved. And as for Wisdom, it is to be found all through the discourses which preserve His Teachings. To see this, one only has to read.

#### **ALL PARTS OF A 'BEING' TRANSMUTED INTO BUDDHAHOOD**

It is important to realize that all parts of personality, or of a 'being' are transmuted into, or have their counterpart in, Buddhahood. The Buddha's way leaves nothing outside and for salvation in His Teaching one does not, for instance, have to leave the intellect undeveloped; *all* energies, those ready-developed and those potential, have to be channelled in the direction of Enlightenment's realization. All have to be used

because Enlightenment requires all and cannot be won otherwise. This too ensures that development is balanced and not one-sided in the direction of faith (when indiscriminately all sorts of dogmas may be believed), nor biased toward understanding (when only dry intellectual facts will be accumulated and no real progress made). Faith and Understanding, emotion and intellect—these are partners on the road to Enlightenment and when there is one without the other, the Way will be lost. A third party joins these two—the will or the conative aspect of personality.

The will can choose which way to go and what to do. With purification it chooses more and more the way of purity. This is where the Perfection of Morality is important and its practice leads, after Enlightenment, to the possession by the Buddhas of the Great Purity. This is an unstainable and forever unstained natural morality. This is a moral sense not dependent upon restraints but through realizing the natural state of things.

The intellect, a useful tool for learning is transmuted after Enlightenment into Wisdom. These two have a certain similarity of function, that is, understanding, but whereas the intellect operates hindered in a maze of Greed, Hate and Delusion, the Enlightened mind, being free of these, allows the unimpeded expression of Transcendent Wisdom.

Emotion has not to be suppressed but rather purified and developed, or else the good qualities which have been spoken of earlier (above III) would never be able to develop. When this is done through Skillful Means, the Great Compassion arises as it did with Gotama the Buddha after His Full Enlightenment.

Thus Enlightenment is development of all the potential skillful aspects of a person until they reach a Transcendental pitch of Perfection.

## **MIND, SPEECH AND BODY OF A BUDDHA**

A person is also characterized by the three aspects of mind, speech and body. The worldling's mind is beset by the Unskillful Roots, his speech affected by their presence and his bodily actions show their influence upon him.

The Buddha-mind is stainlessly pure (even ideas of purity will not adequately describe it). It is the perfected Wisdom-mind about which words can say but little.

A Buddhas' speech is never frivolous or concerned with pleasant chatter. It is confined to words which inspire, which encourage, which show the Way. In this it differs from everyday speech, and in truth it is, Holy speech.

Bodily movements are not very mindfully controlled by worldlings. They fidget about, distort their faces and do all sorts of things of which they are never aware. The Buddhas' bodily ways are never of this sort. Perfection expresses itself through a marvellously graceful and careful way of doing everything; so marvellous indeed that some disciples had difficulty in letting Gotama the Buddha out of their sight. Besides this, there are certain bodily gestures, mostly with the hands which, in relation to Enlightenment, have definite meanings. These can be seen to this day preserved in the figures of Lord Buddha in every temple in every Buddhist country. One gesture typifies meditation, another Enlightenment, a third is bestowing fearlessness, another Preaching the First Sermon and so on. There are many of these gestures — they convey in bodily form the different aspects of the mind of Enlightenment within.

## **THE WHEEL AS THE BUDDHIST SYMBOL**

Little now remains to be added to this brief account. Having outlined belief, the practice or the Way and realization or attainment of Enlightenment, and readers may now understand why the symbol of the Teachings of the Buddha, is a

wheel. A wheel revolves, it is dynamic and it enables things to go from place to place. The Wheel of the Teaching rolls forward from one spiritual gain to the next until Enlightenment is won. It has eight spokes which represent the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path covering Morality, Meditation and Wisdom. The rim of the wheel is the steady application of those factors in the practicer's life. Finally it has a hub, Enlightenment, and as a wheel would be useless unless it had a hole in its hub, so as the centre of the Wheel of Teaching, there is the great Void. A wheel may be made to turn by anyone who exerts himself. Is it not worthwhile to make efforts to revolve this Wheel?

And now, but one matter remains to be clarified as it is frequently the subject of discussion.

#### **THE BUDDHAS AFTER THEIR FINAL PASSING AWAY**

During Lord Buddha's lifetime, he was often asked what would happen after he had passed away? Would he be reborn, or not? We are again dealing with a matter where language proves inadequate and it is well to bear this in mind when examining His reply which refers to all those who have gained Liberation.

“It does not fit the case to say: that they are reborn, that they are not reborn, that they both are and are not reborn, or that they neither are nor are not reborn.”

Their state is obviously inexpressible and Lord Buddha did not want people to confuse themselves more than they were already by trying uselessly to puzzle out an 'answer' to this question. It is quite obviously something which should be found out from one's own experience rather than a matter to be reasoned about.

Regarding the various rejected alternatives above, in the first, the Buddha makes it quite clear that He and others like Him, have cut off the craving and ignorance which power the round of rebirth. In the second, the idea that final Nirvāna is annihilation is very definitely rejected. The other two cases deal with the remaining alternatives of Buddhist logic, thus making all sophistry impossible.

At the same time, readers should remember that the Buddhas are everywhere looked upon as, "Lords of the Great Compassion", a Compassion which cannot die or become in anyway extinguished. On the one hand the Great Wisdom shows us how they are not to be thought of in any way as 'existing' while on the other, the Great Compassion never abandons worldly creatures who are continuing to experience their round of suffering rebirth.

Buddhists in their homage to their last Great Teacher chant in the euphonious Pāli Language a stanza which is translated below :

"O Lord of Great Compassion, for the happiness of all beings,

Have you fulfilled all Perfections, and attained the Highest Wisdom;

By the truth of this saying, may all have this joyous victory!

Conquering the Evil at Bodhi-tree's root, increasing delight among the Sakiyas,

May you conquer as He has, may you win this victory of joys!

He rejoices in reaching the topmost, cross-legged sitting and undefeated,

On the lotus highest above earth, where all Buddhas are empowered!"

They may also add:

*"Sīla, nekkhamma, paññādim  
Puretvā sabba pāramim  
Pārami sikkharāṃ patvā  
Buddho hessam anuttaro."*

And this is, in English:

"Having fully practised,  
Morality, Renunciation and Wisdom  
And the other Perfections well learnt  
May I become a Buddha Supreme!"

•  
May all beings be happy and at their ease.  
May they all awaken to Full Enlightenment.

**Pāli and Sanskrit equivalents of words  
marked with an asterisk in the text**

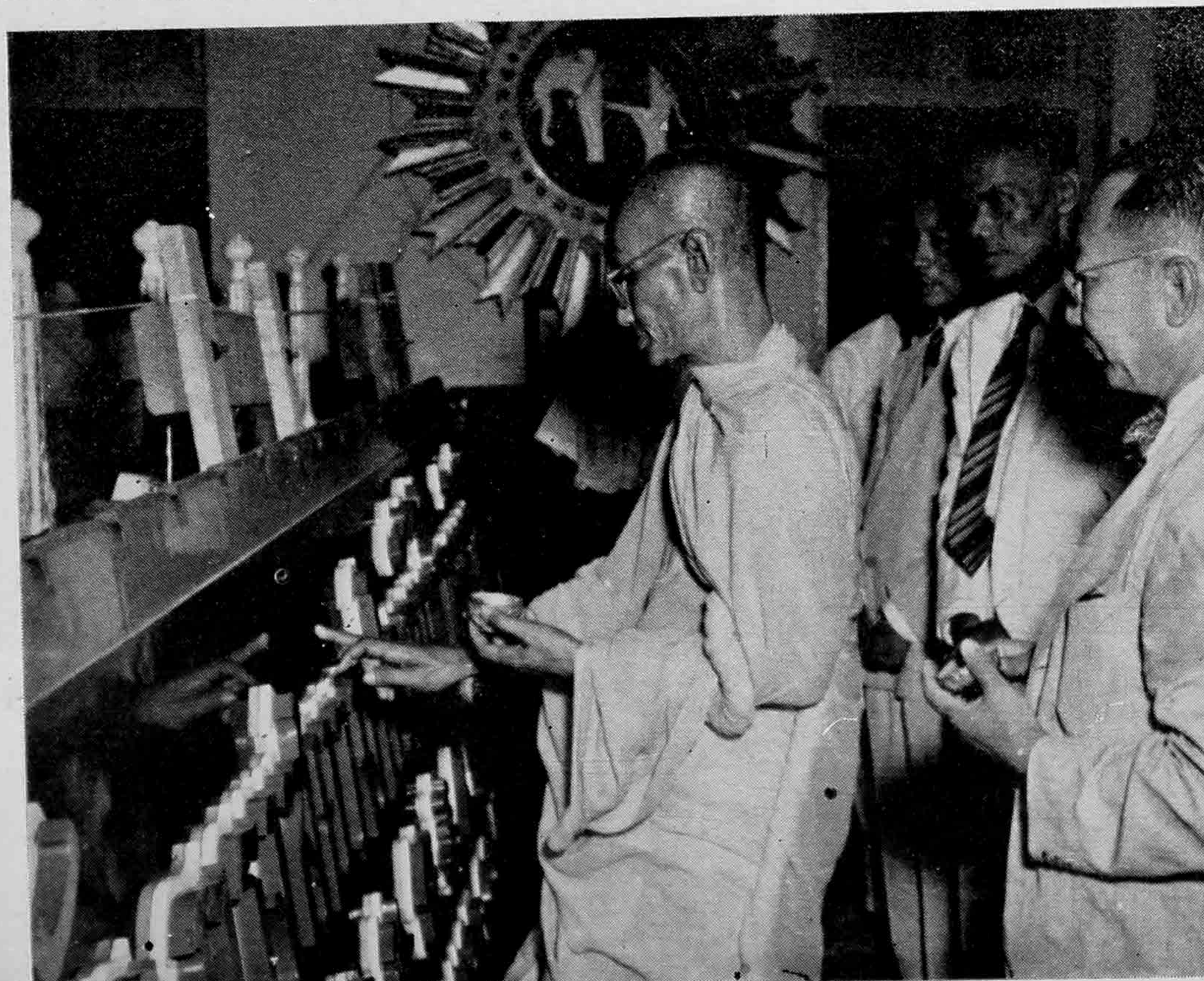
The writer is well aware that many will disagree with the idea of leaving all foreign words out of the text. In doing so, he has warned readers that they miss much of the richness of Buddhist thought, and trusts that those who wish to carry on with Buddhist studies will at least learn a few of these key words. A technical subject requires a technical vocabulary: Buddhism dealing with the Enlightenment of man is certainly a technical subject in this respect.

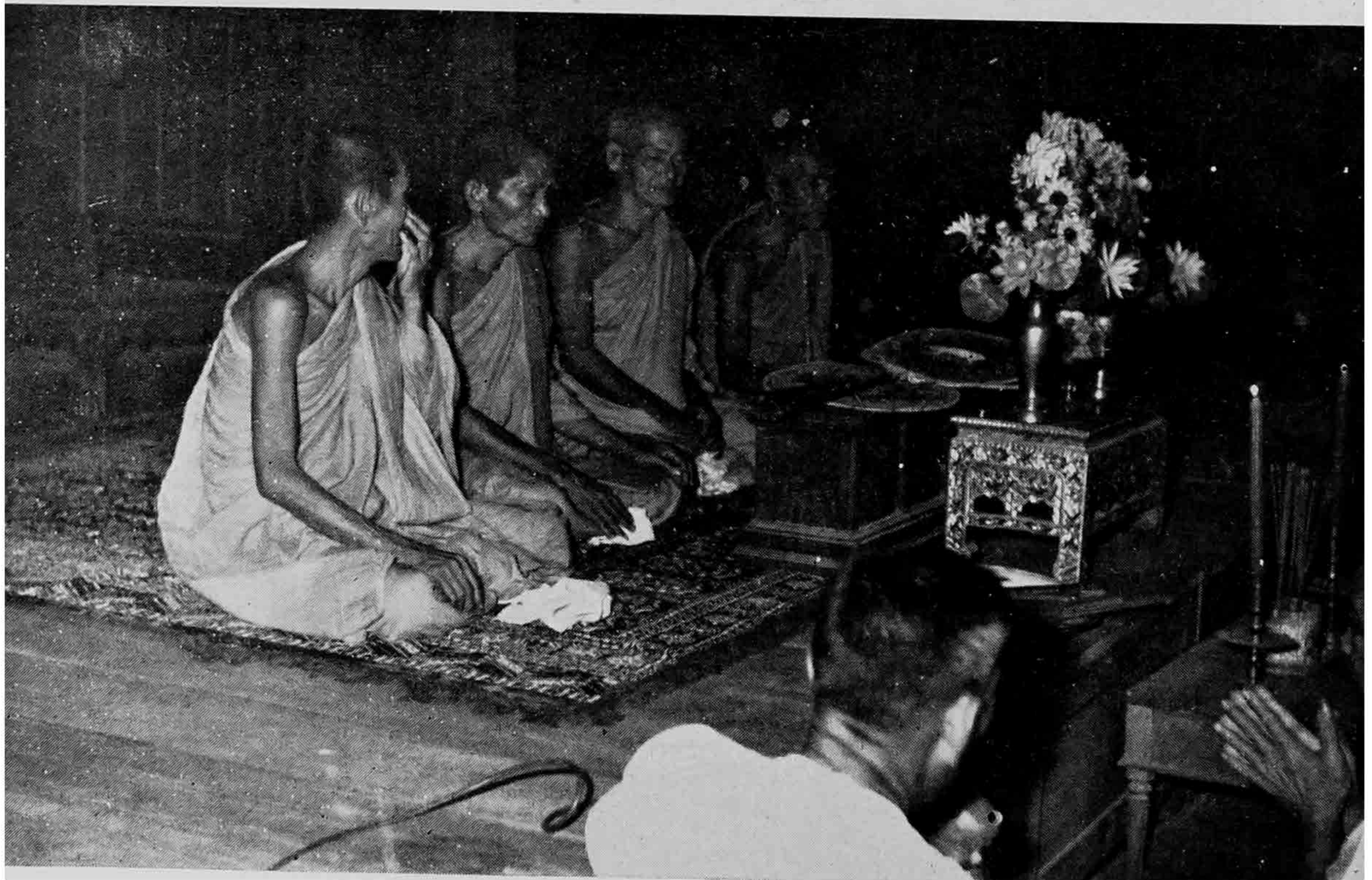
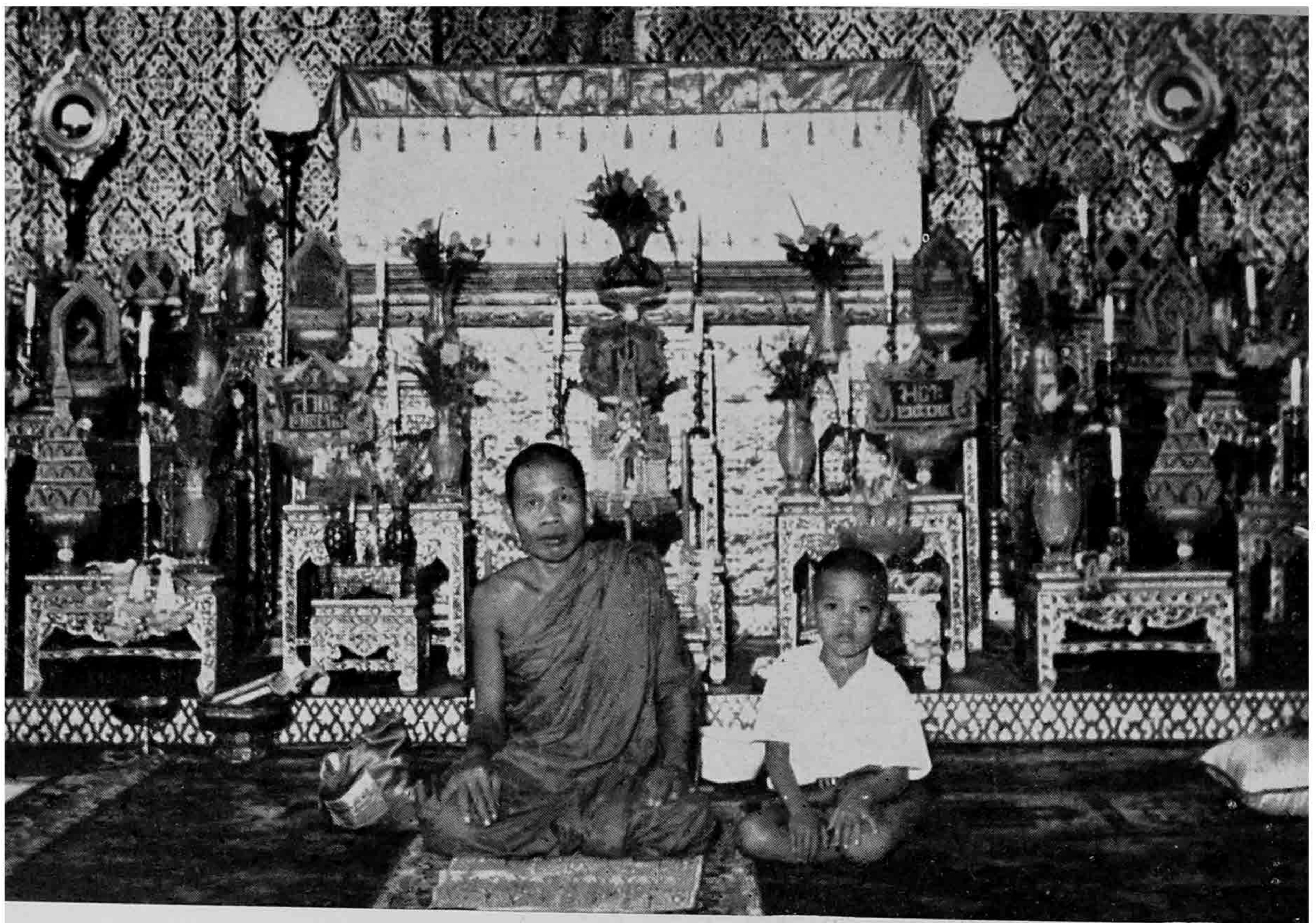
On page	
2. come-and-see	ehipassiko
2. leading onwards	opanāyiko.
2. each wise man for himself	pacattam veditabbo viññūhi.
3. (footnote) selflessness	anattā. (Skt anātman)
4. good friends	kalyāna-mitta. (Skt kalyāna-mitra)
5. Perfect Enlightenment	Sammā-sambodhi. (Skt Samyak-Sambodhi)
5. best among men	uttamapurisa
6. timeless	akāliko
7. perfections	pārami (Skt pāramitā)
9. Wisdom-being	Bodhisatta (Skt Bodhisattva)
9. god	deva, devatā
12. unknowing, ignorance	avijjā. (Skt avidyā)
12. the realm of wandering in birth-and-death	saṃsarā
14. Sage of the Sakiyas	Sakiyamuni (Skt Śākyamuni)
14. destruction of the poisons	āsavakkhaya-ñāna
16. Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law	Dhammacakkappavattana-Sutta
16. monk	bhikkhu
17. Order of Buddhist monks	bhikkhu-saṅgha. (Skt bhikṣu)
17. Order of Buddhist nuns	bhikkhuni-saṅgha. (Skt bhikṣuni)
18. meditative consciousness	concentrated absorption jhāna (Skt dhyāna)



A monk taking part in a philosophical discussion on radio.

A monk blesses newly opened business premises.





When a person dies, monks comfort both the quick and the dead.

18. That attainment of Perfection-liberation from the round of birth-and-death which-leaves nothing behind.  
anupādisesa-Nirvāna
18. reliquary mounds and monuments thupa, cetiya  
(Skt stupa-caitya) (Thai: cedi)
19. The Books of Discipline Vinaya-Piṭaka
19. The Discourses of Lord Buddha and His disciples.  
Sutta Piṭaka (Skt Sūtra)
19. Books of psychological analysis and synthesis  
Abhidhamma Piṭaka (Skt Abhidharma)
21. Unsatisfactoriness, suffering etc. dukkha. (Skt duḥkha)
23. Craving tanhā. (Skt triṣṇā)
29. Unsatisfactoriness dukkha  
its arising dukkha samudaya  
its cessation dukkha nirodha  
and the Way leading to dukkha nirodha gāminī  
its cessation patipadā
30. action kamma (Skt karma)
30. results vipāka
30. Skillful and unskillful action  
kusala and akusala kamma
32. Dependent Origination Conditioned Co-production  
paticca-sammappāda (Skt pratitya-samutpada)
39. being seeking rebirth gandhabba, sambhāvesī  
(Skt gandharva)
39. intermediate state antarabhāva
47. titan asura
50. hungry ghosts peta (Skt preta, Thai pret)
52. hells (s) niraya (Skt naraka, Thai norok)
60. mental states (mind) citta
60. mental factors cetasikā (Skt caitta-dharmāh)
60. pragmatic psychology abhidhamma

62.	Roots of unskill	akusalā mūla	
62.	Perversions-Perverted Views	vipallāsa	(Skt viparyāsa)
66.	Three Marks of Existence	tilakkhaṇa	(Skt trilaksana)
66.	clear-seeing-insight	vipassanā	(Skt vipaśyanā)
68.	Five Heaps or Groups	pañca khandha	(Skt pañca skandha)
	form (physical and subtle)	rūpa	rūpa
	feeling	vedanā	vedanā
	perception	saññā	samjñā
	habits and tendencies	sankhārā	samskārah
	consciousness	viññāna	vijñāna
72.	Worldling	Puthujana	(Skt prthagjana)
72.	Noble One	Ariya	(Skt Ārya)
72.	defilements	kilesa	(Skt kleśa)
74.	hearing (and reading) wisdom	suta-maya paññā	(Skt – – prajñā)
74.	thinking wisdom	cinta-maya paññā	
75.	giving, generosity	dāna	
77.	morality	sīla	
77.	ways (or steps) of training	sikkhāpada	
77.	Five Precepts	Pañca-sila	(Skt – Śīla)
83.	non-harming	ahimsa	
84.	compassion	karunā	
84.	Five Ennobling Virtues	pañca dhammā	(Kalyānadhammā) (Skt dharmāh)
	Loving – kindness	Mettā	
	Generosity, giving	Dāna	
	Contentment	Santutthi	
	Truthfulness	Sacca	
	Mindfulness, awareness	Appamāda	
85.	Eight Precepts	Attha sīla	(Skt Aśta śīla)



95. Conditioned Co-production see 32

95. “ This being, that becomes; from the arising of this, that arises: this not becoming that does not become: from the ceasing of this, that ceases ”.

“Imasmim sati, idam hoti; imass’ uppādā, idam uppajjati; imasmim asati, idam na hoti; imassa nirodhā, idam nirujjhati ”.

96. Mindfulness of breathing	ānāpāna-sati
97. Loving-kindness	mettā (Skt maitrī)
98. Patience	khanti (Skt kśānti)
99. contentment	santutthi
99. gratitude	kataññu
100. humility	nivāta
101. one who knows	aññātārī
102. Accomplished Ones	Arahanta (Skt Arhat)
104. relative truth	samutti-sacca (Skt samvrtti-satya)
105. Ultimate Truth	paramattha-sacca (Skt paramartha-satya)
107. Right View	sammā ditthi (Skt samyak drsti)
113. Three Spheres of Purity	Tri-maṇḍala-parisuddhi
113. Ten Perfections	(Skt) Dasa pāramitā

**In Pali:**

Giving	Dāna (3)		Dāna (3)
Morality	Śīla (4)		Śīla (4)
Renunciation	Nekkhamma (1)		Kśānti (5)
Wisdom	Paññā (8)		Vīrya (6)
Determination	Adhitthāna		Samādhi (7)
Energy	Viriya (6)		Prajñā (8)
Patience	Khanti (5)	Skillful Means	Upāya-kausalya(9)
Truthfulness	Sacca (10)	Vowing	Praṇidhāna (2)
Loving-kindness	Mettā	Strength	Bala
Equanimity	Upekkhā	Wisdom	Jñāna.

**In Sanskrit:**

The numbers above show the order of the Perfections in our combined list.

118.	true nature of reality	dhammatā (Skt dharmatā)
125.	Three (doors) of Freedom	Tivimokkha (Skt Trivimoksa)
125.	Concentration	Samādhi
126.	Three marks of existence	Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā Sabbe dhammā anattā
127.	No-self of persons	(Skt) pudgala nairātmya
127.	No-self of events	(Skt) dharma nairātmya
127.	events	dhammā (Skt dharmāḥ)
128.	timeless (see 6)	
131.	non-greed	alobha
	non-hatred	adosa
	non-delusion	amoha

## List of Books for Further Reading

These are graded from easy to more technical treatises. Besides the books mentioned here, there are many others though some are inaccurate. Those listed here are some of the best and are recommended for further reading.

### I On Thai Buddhism

*Thai Buddhism* by Dr. Kenneth Wells, Bangkok.

*Buddhism for the Young* by H.S.H. Princess Poon Diskul,  
Bangkok.

*The Wheel of the Law* by Henry Alabaster, London, (1871).

### II On Buddhism Generally

*The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*

by F.J. Thomas; Kegan Paul, London,

*The Life of Gotama the Buddha* by Brewster; Kegan Paul.

*Where Buddhism Begins And Why It Begins There*

by Bhadanta Sangharakshita; Mahā Bodhi Society Calcutta

*What the Buddha Taught* by Bhadanta W. Rahula. Gordon  
Frazer Galleries, Oxford.

*Some Sayings of the Buddha* by Woodward; Oxford Press.

*The Dhammapada* (translated) by Bhadanta Nārada;  
Wisdom of the East Series. John Murray.

*The Lion's Roar* (translations) by D. Maurice, Rider and  
Co, London.

*Early Buddhist Scriptures* by Thomas; Kegan Paul.

*The Path to Deliverance* by Bhadanta Nyānatiloka; Buddha  
Sāhitya Sabhā, Colombo.

*The Word of the Buddha* by Bhadanta Nyānatiloka.

And other publications of the Buddhist Publications  
Society 54 A Sangharāja Mawata P.O. Box, 61,  
Kandy, Ceylon.

Translations of the Pali Text Society 30 Dawson Place,  
London N.W. 1. England.

*The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*

by Bhadanta Nyānaponika; Rider and Co. London.

*Jātaka Stories* by Thomas and Williams; Jaico Books,  
Calcutta.

*Buddhism Its Essence and Development* by Dr. E. Conze;  
Bruno Cassirer, Oxford.

*Buddhist Texts* (anthology) ed Conze ditto.

*Buddhist Scriptures* (") " " Penguin Books,  
London

*A Survey of Buddhism* by Bhadanta Sangharakshita;  
Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore.

*Selected Sayings from the Perfection of Wisdom* by Conze;  
Buddhist Society. London.

*Buddhist Wisdom Books* by Conze; Allen and Unwin,  
London.

## APPENDIX

Many visitors to Siam, as to other Buddhist countries may very easily see lay Buddhists requesting and then being given the Three Refuges and Five Precepts by a monk. Seeing this, they might want to know what it was all about as they are formulated in Pāli, the ancient religious language of the Southern Buddhist countries. For their help, the Refuges and Precepts are given here in the Pāli language with translations and some other relevant information.

First, the Refuges and Precepts must be requested by those who wish thereby to declare themselves followers of the Exalted One, undertaking further to train themselves in the five specified ways of moral observance. The Refuges and Precepts may not be given without such a request being made; this is to ensure that all those who take the Precepts (etc)-not always all of the persons present in a gathering – that those who do so, really wish quite freely to take those rules of training upon themselves. This is an adequate safeguard against forced conversion of unwilling persons by over-zealous propagators, such a thing being very un-Buddhist. Then again, the request is made three times, this number being common in all manners of Buddhist ceremonies and pronouncements, thus making sure that everyone is quite clear about what is being done and fully understands its purpose. Before doing this, all persons honour the Three Jewels by making a triple prostration and throughout the entire proceeding the hands are held together in a reverential gesture (añjali).

- |          |                                               |                                       |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|          | 1. Ahaṃ (mayam)                               | bhante, tisanena                      |
|          | I (we)                                        | Venerable Sir, with the Three Refuges |
| saha     | pañcasīlāni yācāmi (yācāma)                   |                                       |
| together | with the Five Precepts I ask for (we ask for) |                                       |
|          | 2. Dutiyampi, ahaṃ.....                       |                                       |
|          | For the second time, I.....                   |                                       |



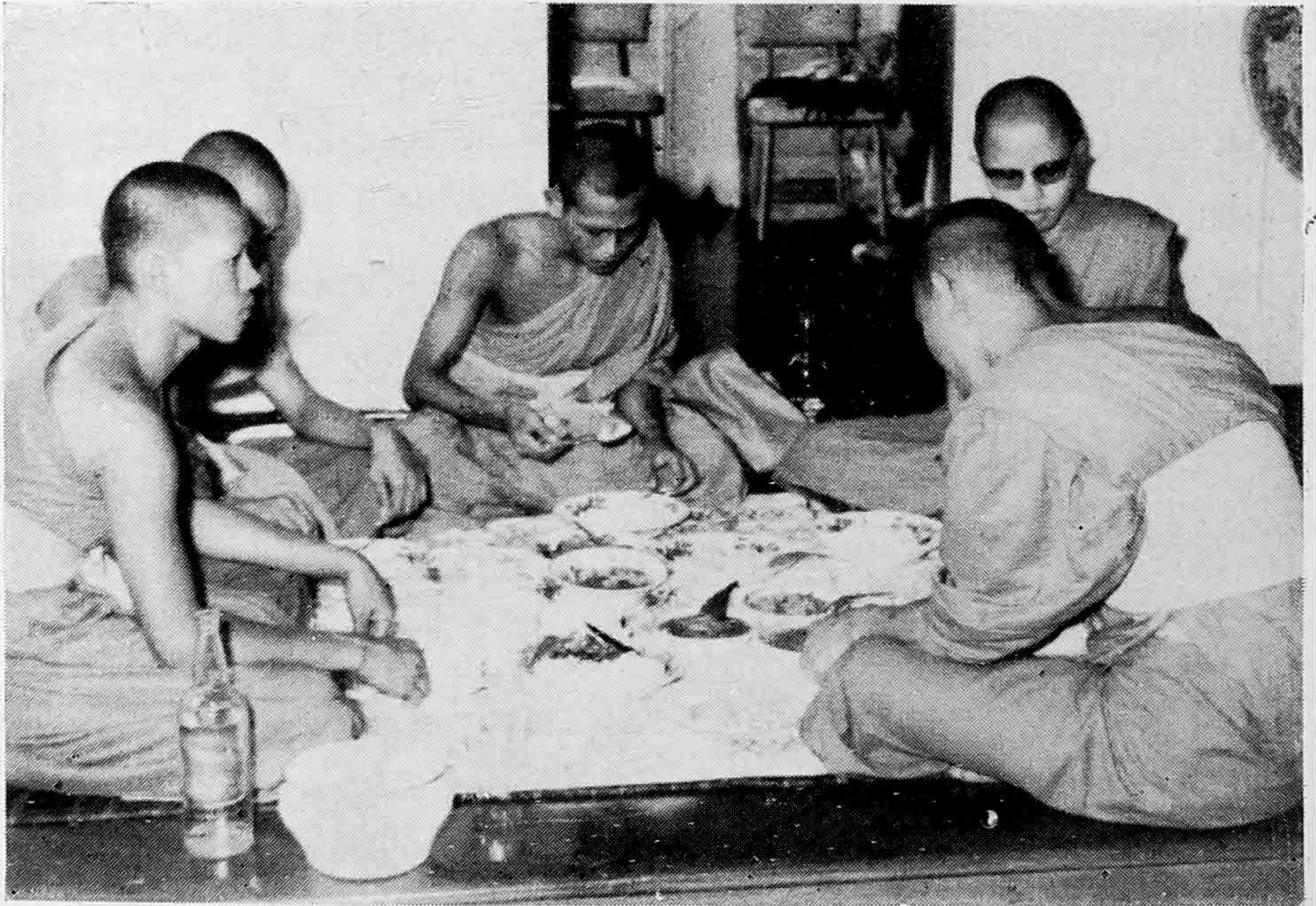
A Buddhist ceremony beginning with a layman taking the refuges and precepts from a monk.

Then a chapter of monks recite holy stanzas.





After which, food is offered to them.

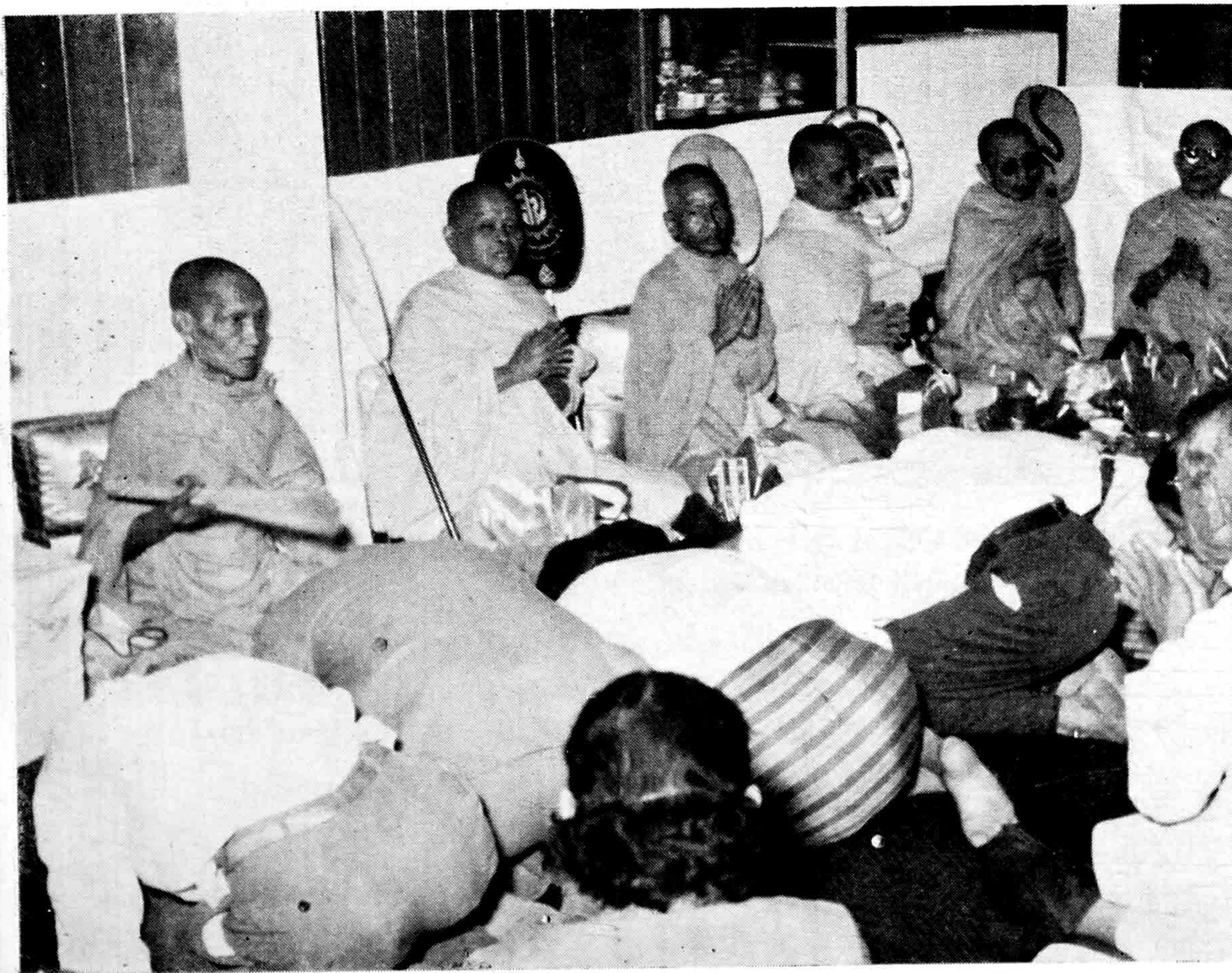


Then they eat.



Having finished with their meal, they receive gifts from householders.

Before they depart, the presiding monk sprinkles consecrated water on the congregation.





When monks chant their blessing, a lay person pours water to transfer merit to other beings.

3. Tatiyampi, aham.....

For the third time, I.....

Or in English: Venerable Sir, I request the Three Refuges together with the Five Precepts. For the Second time.....  
For the third time.

The monk then says :

“ Yam aham vadāmi, tam vadehi ”

Whatever I say, you should repeat.

And the lay-person(s) responds:

“ Āma, bhante. ”

Yes, Venerable Sir.

The monk then intones :

“ Namō Tassa Bhagavato, Arahato, Sammāsambuddhassa. ”  
( 3 times ).

The lay-people repeat this very ancient formula of worship three times. The first time venerating the countless Buddhas of the past, the second time paying homage to the Buddha of the present ( Gotama the Perfectly Awakened ), and third is for the reverence of those who will be Buddhas in the future ( such as Ariya Metteyya Bodhisatta now awaiting in Tusita Heaven a suitable time to take birth here among men ). In English, this reverential address to the Buddhas, may be translated:

“ Praise to the Blessed One, the Accomplished One, the Perfectly Illumined One. ”

In this way, the Great Compassion of the Buddhas is remembered by the word “ Bhagavato ”, their Great Wisdom when reciting “ Arahato, ” and that they have attained that sublime pinnacle of Enlightenment in which these qualities not only balance each other but are fully, complementary, thus one praises them as “ Sammāsambuddha ”

Now follow the Refuges in the Buddha, His Teaching and His Order. Each one is first intoned by a monk and then repeated by the laity :

“Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi,  
 Dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi,  
 Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi,  
 To the Buddha for Refuge I go.  
 To the Dhamma for Refuge I go.  
 To the Sangha for Refuge I go.

Dutiyampi Buddham.....Dhammam.....Sangham,  
 For the second time to the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha.

Tatiyampi Buddham.....Dhammam.....Sangham  
 For the third time.....”.

Pāli word-order being somewhat different from English, the Refuges in the latter language are best phrased: “To the Buddha, I go for Refuge” etc.

They are repeated three times in Pali, to make certain that those repeating them are fully mindful of what they are doing. In addition, while taking them, upon the first repetition one thinks of Taking Refuge with one’s mind. Upon the second, with one’s speech, and while repeating them the third time, one takes Refuge with one’s body. These three, mind, speech and body, being the doors of action of a human being, including as they do all his actions, all must take Refuge in the Triple Gem. This is ‘whole-heartedly’ Taking Refuge but to do so merely by pressing together one’s palms (body) or just by unmindfully droning out words (speech), these are really no refuges at all; because of this, the monk who is giving them, then questions the lay people thus: “Tisarangamanam sampurnam”? The going to the Three Refuges has been fully (taken)? And they reply: “Āma, bhante” Yes, Venerable Sir.

Being assured that they are properly established in the three Refuges, for the precepts are never given to those who have not faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, the monk proceeds to chant the Five precepts, each one of which the lay-people repeat after him.

1. “Pānātipātā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi  
killing (and hurting) refraining from, training, steps of, I  
undertake, or in English order :

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from killing (and  
hurting).

2. Adinnādānā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi  
(not taking not given)

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking what  
is not given.

3. Kāmesu micchācārā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi  
(in sexual desires wrong conduct)

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from wrong-doing  
in sexual desires.

4. Musāvādā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi  
(false speech)

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from false speech  
(lies, back biting, harsh speech, idle chit-chat).

5. Sura-meraya-majja-pamādatthāna veramanī sikkhāpadam  
samādiyāmi

(distilled, fermented, drugs, heedlessness-producing alcoholic  
drinks)

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from all fermented  
and distilled liquor and drugs all of which produce heedlessness  
(in mind).

Upon the laity repeating this last precept, the monk then  
chants a passage showing the benefits of keeping these  
precepts. He may say: “Tisaranena saddhim pañca-sīlam  
dhammam sādhu kam surakkhitam katva appamādena sam-  
pādeṭha”. The last two words are also the last ones uttered  
by Lord Buddha at Kusināra before His Final Passing-Away.  
The passage means: Three Refuges together with the Five  
precepts having, been taken for one’s welfare, guard (them)  
well (and) with mindfulness make an effort!”

He may also say :

“Imāni pañca-sikkhāpadāni,  
Sīlena sugatim yanti,  
Sīlena bhogasampadā,  
Sīlena nibbutim yanti  
Tasmā silam visodhaye.”

This means:

“These (are) the Five Rules of Training  
Keeping these precepts one may go to the happy bourns.  
Keeping these precepts become wealthy,  
Keeping these precepts gain the Cool (Nirvāna)  
That is why these precepts should be kept in purity”

This concludes the taking of Refuges and precepts and a person who has done so then again makes the triple prostration having place all his faith in these Refuges. They are truly safe Refuges for one is really taking Refuges in Enlightenment, the Way to Enlightenment and the Enlightened Teachers who are ‘Ones-who-know’. No other Refuges are necessary, for in these one has the highest already. In order to practice so that these Refuges are realized in Enlightenment sa three inward Gems, the Five precepts are taken. They are the first step to Enlightenment.

The Buddha has said:

“Think not lightly of good, saying:  
‘It cannot come near to me’.  
Even by the falling of drops, a water-jar is filled.  
Likewise, the wise man, gathering little by little,  
fills himself with good.”

(*Dhammapada* 122 translated by Bhadanta  
Nārada Mahāthera).



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